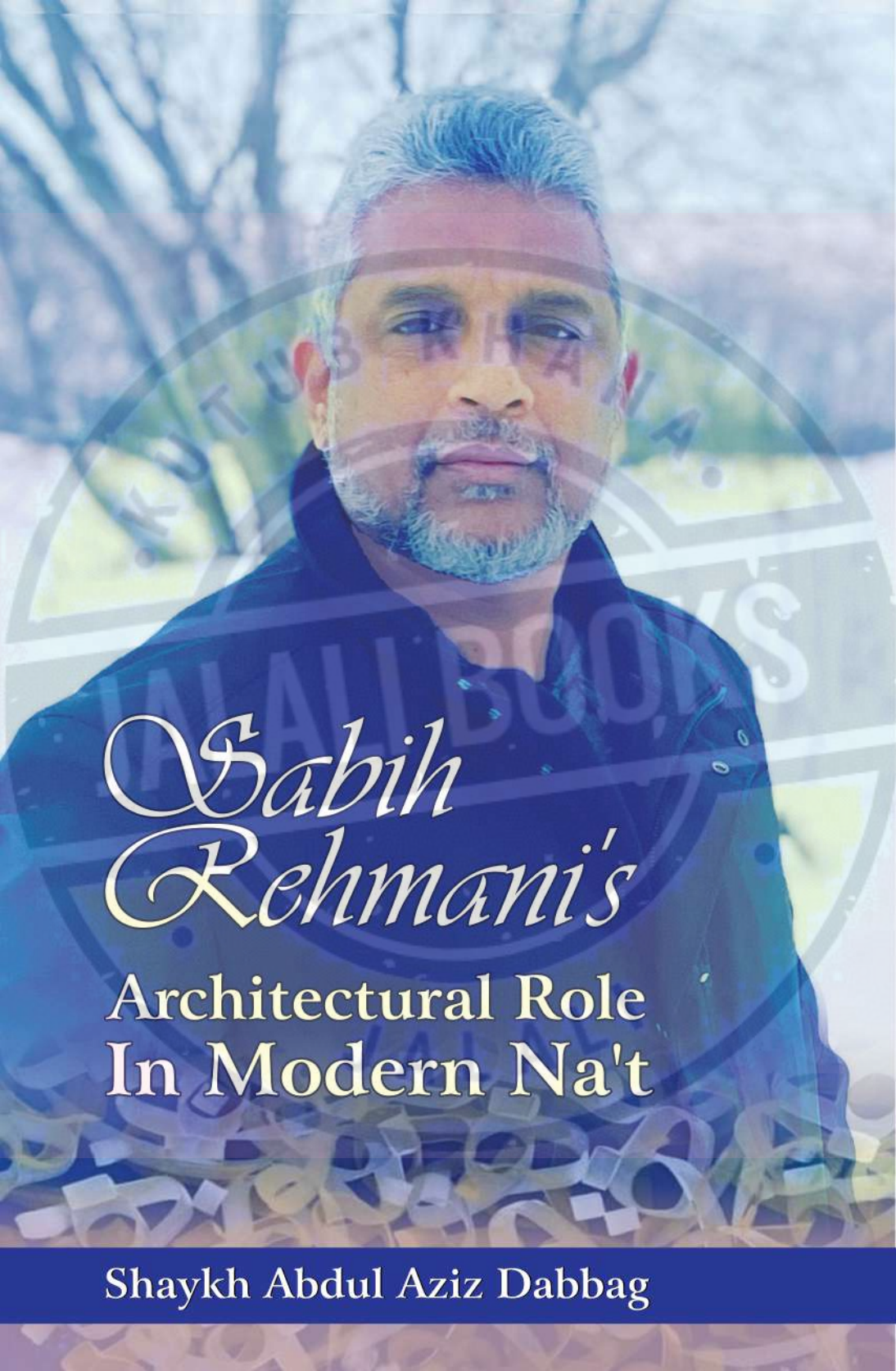


Sabih Rehmani's

Architectural Role In Modern Na't

Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbag

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By

Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbagh

KUTUBKHANA. JALALI BOOKS JALALI

Sabih Rehmani's Architectural Role in Modern Na't
Authored by Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbagh

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KUTUB KHANA
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Dedicated to

Hassan b. Thabit ﷺ

The Na't poet of Allah's Messenger ﷺ

Supported by

The Archangel Gabriel (Jibrael) ﷺ

KUTUB KHANA
JALALI BOOKS
JALALI

تمنا ہے کہ ہو وہ نام نامی آپ کا آقا ﷺ
میں جو لفظ آخری بولوں، میں جو لفظ آخری لکھوں

Be it your divine name my master, I yearn,
The last word I speak, the last word I pen.

Sabih Rehmani

JALALI BOOKS

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Foreword

It is a fact that Sabih Rehmani has played a vital role in not only popularizing Na't poetry but also getting it recognized as a literary genre. Sabih's Na't poetry as well as his relentless efforts—which he has been carrying out for over a quarter of a century—for promotion of Na't as a literary genre cover a vast domain of activities. Recitation of Na't and editing and publishing a book serial 'Na't Rang' is just one aspect of it. Sabih Rehmani has been instrumental in recognition of Na't as a serious, poetic and valuable genre. For quite long, Na't poetry was considered just a religious genre and was not given a thought beyond a sacred image and a revered attitude. It was Sabih who convinced critics that Na't poetry is as meaningful, profound and thought-provoking as any other poetic genre, or more beautiful and impressive in some cases.

Interestingly, when Sabih began using the word 'tanqeed' (criticism) for the genre of Na't, it caused to raise many heckles as people generally believed that 'tanqeed' meant "criticizing". It took quite long time and great effort for Sabih to convince them that 'tanqeed' means evaluating and not criticizing alone and Na't genre deserves literary evaluation just as any other literary genre does.

But Sabih's efforts have largely been ignored or were recognized only half-heartedly. We must be grateful to Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbagh that he has penned an entire book on Sabih's role in promoting Na't as a literary work. Dabbagh has very carefully crafted the structure of the book and beginning right from where it should have begun: the historical and religious background of Na't and praise for our exalted Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Carefully taking into account all the relevant details, Dabbagh has succinctly presented the essence of Sabih Rahmani's efforts in the field. I congratulate him on this useful work and hope that it will guide the coming generations of researchers who would work on Na't, its significance, place in Urdu literature and Sabih Rahmani's commendable work in this field.

Prof Dr Rauf Parekh
Director General National Language Promotion Department
Islamabad
November 26, 2021.

KUTUB KHANA JALALI BOOKS JALALI

Publisher's Note

It is an absolute pleasure and honour for Yorkshire Adabee Forum to publish the long awaited book in English "Sabih Rehmani's Architectural Role in Modern Na't" by Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbagh. Coincidentally, when Yorkshire Adabee Forum was founded, our chief guest for our launch event was the respected Sabih Rehmani and the first book published by Yorkshire Adabee Forum will be a book about his valuable contributions over last many years to unfold and advance knowledge about literary genetics of modern Na't. Sabih Rehmani has been working on the promotion and development of Na't as a literary genre, a major form of creative expression in Urdu poetry. He is one of the main contributors of this genre nationally and internationally and is well recognised the world over.

This will be one of the first analyses and detailed study of Na't now available in English language.

It will particularly benefit students, writers, researchers, reciters and practitioners of Na't in the west.

Yorkshire Adabee Forum would like to wish Sabih Rehmani all the success in this venture and the future projects he may embark on. We will endeavour to continue our support.

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KUTUB KHANA
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Introduction

The history of Urdu poetry reveals that despite great poets' creative verve to produce Na't, it was not considered a literary genre and was only regarded as a form of religious poetry. The senior and eminent literary critics booked Na't as unassuming and unliterary product. The critical and analytical study of Na't which we find currently in vogue did not exist. A state of inertia had blocked all paths of literary criticism of Na't poetry, which had to be eliminated to make Na't grow and prosper as a literary genre at national as well as global levels. Sabih Rehmani noticed it and, though quite young with scarce resources, took a firm decision to eliminate this scenario. A born hard-task master, he would come in grips with difficulties and elbow his way through all thick and thin.

Just 29 years old, he brought out Na't Rang in 1995 and invited all creative minds to come forward and join this movement to make Na't a literary genre like other genres of Urdu literature. Soon his charisma worked and all brains, senior intellectuals and literary scholars from Pakistan and India joined his revolutionary struggle and made solid contributions in the form of research and criticism studies and dissertations. His book serial Na't Rang, Na't Research Center and research activity are now heading towards setting up a global Na't foundation. This is a success story that has many spiritual, aesthetic, creative, socio-psychological, leadership, inherent and acquired aspects to it.

Today we find great literary scholars and seats of learning conducting research works, PhD and MPhil theses, and producing special papers and journals on his valiant struggle and unparalleled achievements. They discuss his strategies, managerial skills, creative sublimity, quality as well as

quantity of work and scholarly demeanour he employed to explore and disseminate knowledge about the literary genetics of Na't. His venture has indeed scored incredible victories.

When I came across Sabih Rehmani, I felt moved to pen his tale of playing an effective role in architecting modern Na't which universities and scholars are now studying and probing and which was not in sight when he took off his solo flight, later joined by heavy flanks. I expect my readers will find this success story of a diligent literary expert informative and interesting. Sabih Rehmani has dedicated whole of his life to strengthen our link with the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ to earn us deliverance. He has performed a miraculous task in just three decades which literary intellectuals, scholars and poets could not even think of in past three centuries. His role in enhancing the literary status of Na't is simply historic.

Beside numerous works of eminent scholars, the books I have benefitted the maximum in my work include Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar's *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Mudir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat* —The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang; Dr Abrar Abdussalam's *Na'tiya Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis*—Na't Literature: Issues and Premises; Dr Tahira In'am's *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel*— Compilations of Sabih Rehmani: Forming up of New Na't Criticism, and *Sabih Rehmani ki Na'tia Sha'eri, Fikri w Tanqidi Tanazur*— Sabih Rehmani's Na't Poetry by Dr Shama' Feroze. May Allah Almighty bless them all with his mercy and favors!

Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbagh

1. Na't Perception

Ibn Asakar has reported in "Tareekh Damishq al-Kabir" that Urwah stated: Waraqa b. Naufal, Zaid b. Amar and Ubaid Allah b. Hajash went to an idol-house that night and saw that all idols had drooped and collapsed prone on the ground. Taken aback, they lifted up their helpless and powerless gods and put them straight, but they fell down. They erected them up yet again but they went down on their faces. When the idols slumped down the third time, the three men abruptly said together: There was certainly some supernatural or mysterious ghostly reason to that occurrence. In the meanwhile, a voice from one of the idols said:

تَرَدَّى لِمَوْلُوْدٍ أَنَارَتْ بِنُوْرِهِ

جَمِيْعُ فِجَاجِ الْأَرْضِ فِي الشَّرْقِ وَالْغَرْبِ

All these idols have collapsed, for the newborn;
His dawn has filled East 'nd West with his light.[1]

It is narrated in "Sirat al-Halbiya"[2] that while Allah's mercy had wrapped up the whole universe that night, the walls of Allah's Sacred House were crooning and humming:

وُلِدَ الْمُصْطَفَى الْمُخْتَارُ

الَّذِيْ تَهْلِكُ بِيَدِهِ الْكُفَّارُ

وَيُطَهِّرُ مِنْ عِبَادَةِ الْأَصْنَامِ

[1] Ibn Asakar, "*Tareekh Damishq al-Kabir*", 38:336–337.

[2] Sirat al-Halbiya, 1:115; a book about the history of Islam in six volumes by Islamic scholar Ali Ibn Burhan-ud-din Halabi (also written as: Nur ad-Din al-Halabi, or, Nuraddin Halabi).

وَيَأْمُرُ بِعِبَادَةِ الْمَلِكِ الْعَلَّام

The empowered and chosen one has born,
He'll wipe out the disbelievers;
Purifying Sacred House of idol-worship,
Commanding the Worship of Omniscient Sovereign.[3]

1.1 The Grandfather in K'aba

According to Al-Bidaya w'al-Nihaya Bk. al-Sirat al-Rasool p. 325, when the Holy Prophet's grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, learnt about the birth of his grandson, he named him 'Muhammad', took him to the Sacred House, submitted his gratitude and recited the following verses, praying:

الحمد لله الذي اعطاني
هذا الغلام الطيب الاردان
قدساد في المهد على الغلمان
اعيذه بالله ذى الاركان
حتى يكون بلغته الفتيان
حتى اراه بالغ البنيان
اعيذه من كل ذى شنان
من حاسد المضطرب العنان
ذي همته ليس على عينان
حتى اراه رافع اللسان

[3] Ibn Asakar, *Tareekh Damishq al-Kabir*.

اتت الذي سميت في الفرقان

في كتب ثابتته المثاني

احمد مكتوبًا على اللسان

All praise be to Allah alone; He has gifted me the sweet lad; the holy son leading the neonates even in cradle. I place him in Almighty's safeguard. I see him with strong positions and footholds; I put him in Allah's protection, from all evil, jealous and arrogant beings. Gallant and dauntless, with captivating speech, He's named 'Ahmed in scriptures and Qur'an; inscribed on the peoples' tongues.[4]

1.2 The Foster Mother

According to the Arab social norms, the newborn were sent to the caretaking foster mothers to feed and nourish them and foster them into decent, pious, brave and constructive humans. After the holy birth of the Prophet, Abd al-Muttalib, his grandfather, would hear voice from the unseen world, guiding, goading and counseling him to give him to the lady named Halima from the Banu S'ad tribe, for she was divinely directed towards him to embrace his responsibility. The voice blossomed:

إِنَّ ابْنَ آمِنَةُ الْأَمِيْنِ مُحَمَّدَا

خَيْرُ الْأَنَامِ وَخِيرَةُ الْأَخْيَارِ

The heart and soul of Amina, the peace-maker Muhammad was indeed the most exalted one; unparalleled amongst the most pious.

[4] *Al-Bidaya w'al-Nihaya* Bk. *al-Sirat al-Rasool* p. 325.

مَا إِنَّ لَهُ غَيْرُ الْحَلِيْمَةِ مُرْضِعٌ
نِعْمَ الْأَمِيْنَةُ هِيَ عَلَى الْأَبْرَارِ

None but Halima his foster mother be
Trustworthy, honest 'nd emblem of piety
Expert caretaker of the noble is she.

مَأْمُوْنَةٌ مِنْ كُلِّ عَيْبٍ فَاحِشٍ
وَنَقِيَّةٌ الْأَثْوَابِ وَالْأَوْزَارِ

Flawless and decent, free of blemishes,
Guarded, equipped with strong character.

لَا تَسْلَمَنَّهُ إِلَى سِوَاهَا أَنَّهُ
أَمْرٌ وَحُكْمٌ جَاءَ مِنْ جَبَّارِ

Put him not under care, other than her;
A divine decree from the Most Dominant.[5]

It is reported in Tabqat Ibn S'ad (1:111) that Halima S'adia had apprehensions about material benefits from an Orphan. On her reluctant gestures, Syeda Amina spoke to her and uttered these verses that would strengthen her heart with faith and conviction:

أُعِيذُهُ بِاللهِ ذِي الْجَلَالِ
مِنْ شَرِّ مَا مَرَّ عَلَى الْجِبَالِ
حَتّٰى أَرَاهُ حَامِلَ الْحِلَالِ
وَيَفْعَلُ الْعَرْفَ اِلَى الْمَوَالِي

[5] Zaini Dahlan, *al-Serat al-Jabwiya*, 1:56.

وَغَيْرِهِمْ مِنْ حِشْوَةِ الرِّجَالِ

I place my child in my Lord's safeguard,
From the evil that stride's in mountains;
Until I find him riding camel,
Extending compassion n' benevolence to the indigent.[6]

1.3 The Foster sister

His foster sister Sheema would calm him for inducing sleep with this lullaby:

يَا رَبَّنَا أَبْقِ لَنَا مُحَمَّدا
حَتَّى أَرَاهُ يَافِعًا وَأَمْرَدَا
ثُمَّ أَرَاهُ سَيِّدًا مَسُوْدَا
وَاكْبِتْ أَعَدِيْهِ مَعًا وَالْحُسَّدَا
وَأَعْطِهِ عِزًّا يَدُوْمُ أَبَدَا

O Lord! Keep our Muhammad ever-surviving,
Until I see him in youth, And find him as a chief,
Overpower his jealous enemies in a blink,
And crown him with eternal majesty and power.[7]

1.4 The Finest Arabic Verse

Ali b. Zaid b. Jad'an has narrated that the issue was taken up before a group of leading hadith experts to decide which of the Arabic poetic verses can be graded as the finest. They unanimously declared this verse the best one:

[6] *Tabqat Ibn S'ad*, 1:111.
[7] Ibid.

وَشَقَّ لَهُ مِنْ اِسْمِهِ لَيُجِلَّهُ
فَذُوا الْعَرْشِ مَحْمُوْدٌ وَهَذَا مُحَمَّدٌ

For his majestic glory, Allah derived his name from His own,
He is Mahmood and our venerable Prophet, Muhammad.[8]

Al-Bayhaqi has narrated a few verses of Abd al-Muttalib in Dala'il al-Nubuwwa, containing his word of advice for his son Abu Talib about Muhammad, his grandson:

أُوْصِيْكَ يَا عَبْدَ مَنَافٍ بَعْدِي بِمُوْحَدٍ بَعْدَ أَبِيْهِ فَرْدِ
فَارَقَهُ وَهُوَ ضَجِيْعُ الْـمَهْدِ فَكُنْتُ كَالْأُمِّ لَهُ فِي الْوَجْدِ

Remember my word when I depart, in cradle his parents left apart;
Leave him not for a moment uncared, I took him to my bosom, loved and mothered.[9]

1.5 Abu Talib's Love

Bukhari has related in al-Sahih how Abu Talib loved and mothered his nephew and took him as a mercy and bliss for all. He would feel ecstatic and often weave his sentiments into poetic lines. His two verses took fame like his other love-laden versification:

[8] Abu Bakr al-Khlal, *al-Sunnah*, 1:193, §209; Ibn 'Adi, *al-Kamil fi Du'afa' al-Rijal*, 5:197, §1351; Ibn 'Asakar, *Taikh Medina Damishq*, 3:32–33.
[9] al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:22.

وَأَبْيَضَ يُسْتَسْقَى الْغَمَامُ بِوَجْهِهِ
ثِمَالُ الْيَتَامَى عِصْمَةٌ لِلْأَرَامِلِ
يَلُوْذُ بِهِ الْهُلَّاكُ مِنْ آلِ هَاشِم
فَهُمْ عِنْدَهُ فِي نِعْمَةٍ وَفَوَاضِلِ.

His effulgent countenance, the agency of rain and vegetation for people; shelter for orphans and widows; straying Hashims seeking his haven for sustenance; so are they affluent and blessed, for his holiness.[10]

1.6 Hassan b. Thabit's Unique Sentiments

Looking at the illumined face of the Prophet, Hassan b. Thabit ﷺ used to cover his eyes with his palms, lest his dazzle should snatch his vision.

لما رائيتُ انواره سطعت
وضعت من خيفتى كفى على بصرى
خوف على بصرى من حسن طلعته
فلست انظره الا على قدرى
روح من النور فى جسم من القمر
كحلية نسجت من الأنجم الزهر

When I saw his light shining forth, in fear I covered my eyes with my palms, afraid for my sight because of the beauty of his form. So I was scarcely able to look at him at all. The lights from his light are

[10] Bukhari, *al-Sahih*, 1:342 §963.

drowned in his light and his face shines out like the sun and moon in one. A spirit of light lodged in a body like the moon, a mantle made up of brilliant shining stars. I bore it until I could bear it no longer.[11]

Hassan b. Thabit added a sublime couplet to his collection (*Diwan*):

وَأَحْسَنُ مِنْكَ لَمْ تَرَ قَطُّ عَيْنٌ
وَأَجْمَلُ مِنْكَ لَمْ تَلِدِ النِّسَاءُ
خُلِقْتَ مُبَرَّأً مِنْ كُلِّ عَيْبٍ
كَأَنَّكَ قَدْ خُلِقْتَ كَمَا تَشَاءُ

No eye saw the lovely personality like you. And no mother has given birth to such an emblem of beauty. You are created flawless and perfect. You are created, as you wanted to be.

1.7 Jibrael's Divine Help

Recitation of poetic verses by Hassan on the pulpit was a practice with the Messenger of Allah. He would glorify the Prophet, denounce the disbelievers and praise the divine beauty of the Beloved Messenger of Allah. Feeling glad, the Messenger would say:

إِنَّ اللهَ تَعَالَى يُؤَيِّدُ حَسَّانَ بِرُوحِ القُدُسِ مَا يُفَاخِرُ أو يُنَافِحُ عَن رَسُولِ اللهِ.

[11] Al-Nabhani, *Jawahar al-Bahar*, 2:450.

> Allah Most High indeed helps Hassan through the Holy Spirit for glorifying and defending the exalted Messenger of Allah.[12]

The Prophet believed that Hassan b. Thabit was inspired by Angel Gabriel, and could even reply on his behalf.

1.8 Imam al-Busiri's Ecstatic Love

Imam al-Busiri ﵀ wrote in the glory of Allah's exalted Messenger:

الصُّبْحُ بَدَا مِنْ طَلْعَتِهِ
وَاللَّيْلُ دَجا مِنْ وَفْرَتِهِ

> The light of dawn is from the radiance of your face
> The sparkle of the night is from the glimmer of your hair.

كَنْزُ الْكَرِيمِ مُوْلِي النِّعَمِ
هَادِي الأُمَمِ لِشَرِيعَتِهِ

> Our Master is a treasure of grace, a treasure of mercy. He is the guide of the entire nation, with the sacred law.

سَعَتِ الشَّجَرُ نَطَقَ الحَجَرُ
شُقَّ القَمَرُ بإشَارَتِهِ

> On your finger's gesture, trees walked, stones spoke.
> And on ripping signal the moon split into two.

[12] al-Tirmidhi in *al-Sunan*: Bk.: *al-Adab* [Noble Conduct] What is said about reciting Na't, 5:138, §3609.

جِبْرِيلُ أَتَى لَيْلَةَ أَسْرَى

وَالرَّبُّ دَعَاهُ لِحَضْرَتِهِ

Jibril came with tidings from Allah on the Night of Ascension. Allah invited you to the heavens and gave you glory.

فَمُحَمَّدُنا هُوَ سَيِّدُنا

فالعِزُّ لَنا لإِجَابَتِهِ

Muhammad ﷺ is our benefactor; He is our Chief. His favor and grant will preserve our dignity.[13]

1.9 The Believers' Mother 'Aisha ﵂ Tranced

The mother of the believers, 'Aisha ﵂ has narrated: "I was sitting, weaving cotton and the beloved Messenger of Allah was mending his shoes. He perspired and the blessed sweat started emitting light. This beautiful sight entranced and lifted me out of myself. Seeing me in ecstasy, the exalted Messenger of Allah said, "'Aisha, what happened; why overwhelmed?" I submitted: "(Messenger of Allah!) Sweat is dropping from your blessed forehead, spewing light. Had Abu Kabir Hazli (famous Arab poet) seen you, he would indeed have learned that truly you had the right to his poetic verse." He said: "'Aisha, what has Abu Kabir Hazli said?" The mother of the believers, 'Aisha ﵂ said: "I submitted: He says:

وَمُبَرّاءٍ مِنْ كُلِّ غُبَّرِ حَيضَتِهِ

وَفَسَادِ مُرضِعَتِهِ وَدَاءٍ مُغَيَّلِ

[13] Imam al-Busairi, *Poetic works*.

فَإِذَا نَظَرْتَ إِلَي أَسِرَّتِه وَجْهِهِ
بَرَقَتَ كَبَرْقِ الْعَارِضِ الْمُتَهَلِّلِ

"My love is pure of the blemish of menses, lochia and feeding; If you see her effulgent visage, you'll only see blushing cheeks."[14]

1.10 What Na't Is!

I started writing poetic verses without any formal introduction to what Na't is. Scholars, poets, intellectuals, critics of literature and historians of eulogistic poetry have given a wide variety of definitions of Na't. I thought it better to serve my readers with the versification of thoughts and feelings of those who had relation of intense love with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. We have seen that all these verses have much more to offer beyond love and veneration. An environment of the unseen divinity emerged here and there out of a system that ensued praise and reverence hued in love and humility with prayers of refuge from Satan's destructive forces and glad tidings of an era immersed in dignity, justice, philanthropy, altruism, sacrifice and fraternization. The idols collapsed and roared a welcome sentiment to the Final Prophet reported in scriptures revealed to preceding Prophets. The walls of the sacred House crooned with enchanting lines of purification of Ka'ba of idol-worship and the Worship of Omniscient Sovereign. The Grandpa begged from God his safety, security, stability and victory against evil forces.[15] He is divinely guided who to employ for his nursing and brought-up.[16] His mother again is inspired to praise her son to fortify

[14] al-Bayhaqi in *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 7:422 §15204; Abu Naeem in *Hulit-ul-awlia*, 2:46.
[15] Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Seerat al-Rasool*, Vol.4, Ch.2.
[16] Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Seerat al-Rasool*, Vol.4, Ch. 3.

Halima's heart and the foster sister Sheema too would sing the lullaby to tranquil him into sleep. What all is this? Love of course is a conspicuous element that has overwhelmed all events transpiring before and after his holy birth. Veneration and supplications of safeguard and victory against evil forces too are evident. But the divine unseen world's influence over all creations and the creative minds too is quite vividly discernable that signifies his unique, unparalleled status next to God in the universe. Putting all these elements together form what we call Na't. But again it is not possible to wind up this discourse here. Let us see what our master 'Ali has narrated about it:

مَنْ رَآهُ بَدِيْهَةً هَابَهُ، وَمَنْ خَالَطَهُ مَعْرِفَةً أَحَبَّهُ، يَقُوْلُ نَاعِتُهُ: لَمْ أَرَ قَبْلَهُ وَلَا بَعْدَهُ مِثْلَهُ.

> "One who would be blessed with his sight, is awed; he who develops interactions with him, loves him and the one who praises him, says that he has not seen anyone his like before, nor has he seen his similitude after seeing him."[17]

In this hadith, the word Na't (نَعْت) has been used and that too by the one whom the Messenger called the door of the city of knowledge that he himself is.

1.11 The Word 'Na't in Hadith Literature

The word Na't (نَعْتَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ) has been used in several Prophetic hadiths implying admiration of the attributes of the Holy Prophet:

[17] Al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sunan*, Bk. *Al-Munaqib*, What is said about the attributes of the Prophet (ﷺ), 5:599, §3638.

- According to Abu Hurayra ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I met the Prophet Moses during the ascension night." The narrator says:

 قَالَ: فَنَعَتَهُ

 "He then described his traits."[18]

- According to Abu Malik Ash'ari ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ……..a villager came to him and said: some people, neither prophets, nor martyrs, will be such that the Prophets and martyrs will envy their proximity to Allah;

 انْعَتْهُمْ لَنَا

 Tell us their merits and features.[19]

- According to Abd Allah b. Abbas ﷺ, he asked K'ab al-Ahbar ﷺ,

 كَيْفَ تَجِدُ نَعْتَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ؟

 How did he find the praise of Allah's Messenger in Torah?[20]

- According to Yusuf b. Mazin, a person requested 'Ali ﷺ:

 يَا أَمِيْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ، انْعَتْ لَنَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ ﷺ

 "O the Master of believers! Tell us the attributes of Allah's Messenger."[21]

[18] Al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, Bk., The Prophets, Ch., Allah stated: ﴿وَٱذۡكُرۡ فِي ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ مَرۡيَمَ﴾ 3:1269, §3254.

[19] Ahmed b. Hanbal, al-Musnad, 5:343, §22957.

[20] al-Darimi in *al-Sunan*, Ch., Prophet's praise in scriptures preceding him, 1:17 §8, 1:185–186.

- Ibrahim b. Muhammad ﷺ, one of 'Ali's ﷺ descendants, has narrated: 'Ali while إِذَا نَعَتَ رَسُوْلَ اللهِ describing the sacred features of the Holy Prophet ﷺ would praise: "His blessed eyes were black and eyelashes long."[22]
- According to Umar b. 'Ali, 'Ali was requested: Abu al-Hasan! يَا أَبَا حَسَنٍ، انْعَتْ لَنَا رَسُوْلَ اللهِ ﷺ Describe for us the praiseworthy features of Allah's Messenger.[23]

We have seen that wherever the description of blessed attributes of the Messenger of Allah is the subject, the word نَعْت has been employed.

1.12 Using the Word Na't Instead of Eulogy, Panegyric or Others

In English language the expressions employed to connote نَعْت are, devotion, encomium, tribute, etc. For praise poetry, expressions like euology and panegyric are used. However, they have specific usages and do not exactly convey what we mean by Na't. The word نَعْت Na't, has been frequently used in Arabic Hadith literature whenever adoration, glorification or admiration of the beloved Messenger of Allah is expressed. In Urdu literature, there is no other word used for the purpose. Hamd حَمد is used for the glorification of Allah and not for Prophet's praise. These two expressions are specific and are recognized as a genre of Urdu literature. It is, therefore, worthwhile to use these two expressions in English language as well because words like eulogy or panegyric have their own etymology and connotations.

[21] Al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, Bk., The Prophets, Ch., Allah stated: ﴿وَٱذۡكُرۡ فِي ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ مَرۡيَمَ﴾ 3:1269, §3254.

[22] Al-Tirmidhi, *al-Sunan*, Bk., Praises, what has come about Prophet's attributes, 5:599, §3638.

[23] Ibn Sa'd in *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, 1:412.

Eulogy: As for eulogy, in English language and culture, it is a way of saying farewell to someone who has died. That, in a sense, brings the person to life in the minds of the audience. They define it as a speech or piece of writing that praises someone or something highly, especially a tribute to someone who has just died.[24]

Panegyric: It has a Greek, Roman, Arabic and Persian etymological history. Persian language panegyric poems depicted the patron as a hero in a battle between Islam and infidels. In a panegyric poem address to Mahmud Ghaznavi, Firdausi said: "Noble buildings are ruined by rain and by the heat of the sun. I have laid the foundations of a high palace of poetry which will not be damaged by wind and rain."[25] In 1660, several panegyrics were published by English poets in the honor of Charles II of England coming to power.

We have seen that these English words do not describe what we mean by Na't. The words نَعْت and حَمد specifically denote and connote what we actually intend to express and communicate. Therefore, I have used the word Na't for the genre that is our subject here.

1.13 The Companions' Na't Culture

The Companions of the beloved Messenger of Allah attended on him regularly and constantly at home and on journeys, day and night, in dangers and anxieties, in defeat and victories and found him such a master of all situations that they became his sincere devotees. Those who had the talent of creative experience of poetic literature admired his accomplishments and expressed their feelings of adoration for him in their poetic creations. We have seen through the hadiths quoted above that they used the word نَعْت very often.

[24] https://virtualspeech.com/blog/eulogy

[25] Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911), *Panegyric*; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panegyric

The Companions who would praise the holy traits of the beloved Messenger in poetic form were sizeable in number.[26]

After the holy Messenger left, these devotees who loved him more than their own lives and could not stay tranquil without his company were inundated in love pangs and were bestowed with the intuitive moments to express their overwhelming sentiments of his physical absence from amongst them. Then they wrote Na'ts, praise poems and panegyrics.[27]

What our master 'Ali ﷺ described as Na't, was defining and describing the personality, the character, the noble qualities, sublime virtues, and accomplishments of the beloved Messenger ﷺ of Almighty Allah.

Prof Dr Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi, an eminent scholar of devotional poetry in the sense of Researcher and Critic of the poetic art and literature, in his treatise on Allama Yusuf b, Ismael al-Nabhani—a Na't poet of great literary caliber, has comprehensively described how the majority of Companions would compose Na't poetry venerating Allah's Messenger ﷺ. He writes:

> "Na't of the Prophet ﷺ is the most difficult literary genre to compose; yet the Muslims have proved their worth treading this testing path. They have been writing, reciting, publishing and promoting Na't over last fourteen centuries with great zeal and zest everywhere. The elite as well as common people displayed their devotion, humility and veneration equally well and made the tradition of Na't of the Prophet ﷺ an honor and pride for the history of Islam."[28]

[26] Armaghan-e-Na't, Shafiq Brelvi.

[27] Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Muqaddama-e-Seerat Vol I*, p. 254.

[28] Prof Dr Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi, *Allama Yusuf b, Ismael al-Nabhani—a Na't poet of great literary caliber*, Na't Rang 25

According to Ibn Rasheeq:

> "There was not a single individual from amongst Banu Abd al-Muttalib, except the Prophet, who would not compose poetry."[29]

It was so common a practice amongst the Ansar of Medina, that according to Anas ﷺ:

> قدم علينا رسول الله وما في الانصار بيت الا وهو يقول الشعر قيل له وأنت أبا حمزة قال وأنا.

> "When Allah's Messenger ﷺ came to us, all the Ansar people would compose Na't; it was asked, 'O Abu Hamza (Anas ﷺ): do you also compose Na't poetry?' He said: 'yes.'"[30]

> "Hafiz Ibn Abd al-Birr counted 120 Companions composing Na't. Na't could not be made a practice in Mecca due to unfavorable and insecure circumstances there. There, the Companions would be on toes to protect and defend the holy Prophet ﷺ and themselves and were vigilant, alert and valiant soldiers. In Medina, the lighting disclosures of the Prophet ﷺ were at peak—a founder of the state of Medina, inspiring the pious society of Medina, the inventor of a civilization, and the Messenger of a new system of life. A preacher, a thinker, a commander, an army general, reconciling people and showing them the straight path, the Prophet's blessed presence in Medina was a spring season of blossoming flowers of love, dignity and fraternity all around. The Companions would imbue their words with love and devotion and earn his favors, bliss,

[29] *Al-A'mdoh-al-Ibn Shareeq, al-Juz' al-Awwal*, p. 15.
[30] *Muslim*, al-Sahih, Bk. Asceticism, Ch. Denying eulogy, p. 414.

> blessings and largesse. The world witnessed a flash flood of Na't overflowing the whole of society."[31]

We need to ponder how the minor girls gathered in Quba to offer their warmest poetic welcome on the arrival of the Prophet there: طلع البدر علينا is a famous Na't song that we recite in our Na't programs even today. That is a great manifestation of Medina's love psyche for the Beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ displayed in most spectacular manner on the very first day of his blissful arrival. It proves that the Na't sentiment had germinated in the Medina mind-set even before the venerable Prophet blessed that soil with the holy and heavenly touch of his consecrated feet.

It is this tradition of Na't poetry that has reached our times and the ripe minds charged with sincere and fervent love for the holy Messenger ﷺ have conceived it and disseminated its thought and throb to the entire community of seekers of the Prophetic love, the world over.

1.14 Conceiving Na't

See how Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi has observed Na't in his book 'Nisbat':

- Conceiving and composing Na't implies reaching the proximity of the Chief of the world and religion; the journey is on while we are far from destination.
- Na't connotes feeling oneself in the divine presence of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ with all the truths of our existence. There is a chance that we avail such a moment of this spiritually inundated presence in the world of divine expressions and humbled voice.

[31] Dr Ishaq Qureshi, *Allama Yusuf b, Ismael al-Nabhani—a Na't poet of great literary caliber*, Na't Rang 25.

- Na't signifies those few moments of lowered stay bending before Mawaja that eliminate sense of time and lifts one out of oneself.
- Composing Na't refers to waiting for, not fully foreseen, mercy and conferment of largesse.[32]

[32] Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi, *Nisbat*, p. 7.

2. Na't Transition from Arabic and Persian to Urdu

In Arabic poetry, Na't does not exist as a literary genre and is called 'madah' or 'madeeh'. The earliest Na't was written in Arabic during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. From Arabic, it reached a large number of world literatures, including Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu, Seraiki and many more.[33] This not being the subject of this treatise, we need not delve into this study. Senior scholars have created volumes on this subject that may be of great benefit for those who seek to learn it.

2.1 Historical Brief

The tradition of composing Na't poetry in Urdu has a long history. Since almost every Urdu poet has composed at least a few couplets in praise of the Prophet ﷺ, the history of Urdu Na't poetry is as old as Urdu poetry itself. Though major poets of Urdu, such as Qulli Qutub Shah, Vali Dakani, Mirza Sauda, Mir Taqi Mir, Mo'min, Karamat Ali Shaheedi and Ghalib wrote couplets praising the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, it was not until the first half of the 19th century that Na't in Urdu poetry became a recognized and distinct poetical genre all by itself.

It is Maulana Kifayat Ali Kaafi who is credited with making Na't a distinct genre. Maulana Kaafi was an Islamic scholar from Moradabad and was hanged in 1858 by the British colonial rulers for taking part in India's 1857 war of freedom. Another poet who played a role in popularizing Na't in Urdu in early phase was Maulana Ghulam Imam

[33] Shafiq Brelvi, *Armaghan-e-Na't*

Shaheed. Then Hafiz Lutf Barelvi enriched the genre of Na't.[34]

2.2 Na't in Early Period

Dr Aziz Ahsan has produced a tremendous book *Urdu Na'tiya Adab mein Intiqadi Sarmai ka Tehqiqi Mutaliah*—"Research in Urdu Na't Literary Criticism". His work on modern Na't, poetics, aesthetics, historical analysis, literary yardsticks of Na't criticism and allied subjects is colossal and he is indeed an undisputed authority on modern Na't. No one else has proved more supportive and productive contributor to Na't Rang movement, revolution and Na't Research Centre than his estimable personage since the very commencement of Sabih Rehmani's modern Na't venture in 1994-95. His is another reference book on the analytical history of Urdu Na't criticism.

According to his research substantialized with rich evidence, the Urdu poets of early periods versified veneration and peerless station of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They would observe humility and modesty in poetic expressions of his praise and admiration and remain lowly while addressing him, bowing before him for his benevolence and mercy. Such a religiosity proved a legacy for those who succeeded them. However, this was a tradition that continued at individual level and could not be adopted as a practice of regular poetry as we see with Mohsin Kakorvi, Ameer Minai, Hali, Ahmed Raza Khan and others.[35]

[34] Na't in Urdu Poetry, Dr Anwar Sadeed, Poetic Tradition in Urdu Na't, p. 228; Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fatehpuri, *Na't in Urdu Poetry (from Hali to date)Vol.* 1; Dr Rauf Parekh, *History of Na't in Urdu, its Research and Criticism,* DAWN, Dec 12, 2016.

[35] Dr Aziz Ahsan, *Urudu Na't Adab mein Intiqadi Sarmai ka Tehqiqi Mutaliah—Research in Urdu Na't Literary Criticism*, p. 168.

2.3 Mohsin Kakorvi, Ameer Minai and Hali

After early phase, Mohsin Kakorvi and Ameer Minai perfected the art of Na't poetry in Urdu in the last quarter of the 19th century. These two poets have to their credit a collection of Na't poetry each, which was a unique distinction, as till then, no Urdu poet had published a collection of poetry consisting entirely of Na't. Mohsin Kakorvi was the first Urdu poet to have devoted all his poetic talent only to compose Na't.

Later, especially in the post 1857 era, a number of Urdu poets composed Na't full of pathos of the particular situation. Altaf Hussain Hali led the way with his famous Musaddas, titled 'Madd-o-jazar-i-Islam'. It contains a number of stanzas composed in Na't style. His other poems too have Na't elements—fervent love for the Holy Prophet, aesthetic venting of devotion and humbleness and seeking presence in close proximity of his blessed door, portraying in polite manner his divine attributes and trait-jewels that have decked his exalted person. Our Lord Almighty declares his noble conduct and illumined character a role model for us. We are to translate his enlightening and inspiring traditions into our practice, conveying to others the inner peace and tranquility which this overwhelming activity will bestow upon us.

Other significant and prolific Na't poets who created Na'ts and Qasidas (panegyric poetry) include Syed Ali Haider Nazm, Ismael Mirathi, Maulvi Abd al-Rahim, Hafiz Muhammad Tajammul Hussain, and Prof Saleem Panipatti. Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fatehpuri has elaborately talked about their poetic works in his book "Na't in Urdu Poetry, From Hali to date Vol. I".

With a cue from Hali, the three eminent poets Shibli Nomani, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Allama Iqbal wrote some moving pieces of religious and nationalistic poetry

decked with some innovative Na't elements. Another poet known for his Na't poetry is Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan Barelvi—a perfect emblem of devotion and sincere love for Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ that had wrapped up his soul and illumined his inner and outer senses. After the independence in 1947, a new era of Na't in Urdu poetry began, especially in Pakistan. A large number of poets flocked the realm of poetic creativity with an overwhelming sentiment of religiosity and this journey in devotion progressed with great zeal and enthusiasm.[36]

Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fatehpuri in his *Urdu Shaeri mein Na't, Hali say Hall Tak*—"Na't in Urdu Poetry from Hali to date, Vol. II" has quoted Hali how he spent his 20 years before joining topical Mushairas organized by Muhammad Hussain Azad, patronized by Col. Holroyd.

> "For poetry, I had to act as a fake lover for a while. I would concoct stories of craze for an imaginary beloved. Exaggerating, I surpassed all legendary lovers. In poetry I would raise midnight cries in love discomfort and dejection and narrate how his welling eyes would flow, flooding away the whole world. Thus I spoiled my record of deeds and left no chance of escape. I continued this imaginary love-sickness and poetic word-game for long twenty years and assumed I had felt, lived and known the whole world. Then suddenly my eyes opened and I found myself yet at the same place whence I had yet to set out."[37]

[36] Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fatehpuri, *Na't in Urdu Poetry, From Hali to date* Vol. I, II; Dr Aziz Ahsan, *Journey of Urdu Na't in Pakistan*.

[37] Dibacha *Musaddis-i-Hali*, p-1/2; Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fateh Puri, *Urdu Saheiri mein Na't, Hali say Hall Tak—Na't in Urdu Poetry, from Hali to date Vol. II*, p. 9.

In 1874, Muhammad Hussain Azad called him to Lahore to join his topical Mushairas that were the bright idea of Col Holroyd who established Anjaman Punjab in 1873 and overviewed the program. Now you can compare this Hali with later Hali, his literary poetry with devotional commotion.[38]

Religiosity and devotional poetry thus made the legacy of later Urdu poets who upheld it but without any critical assessment and evaluation. Hali laid down the foundation of lucidity, simplicity, affective expression, rationality and reformation to foster a new generation of writers and poets. The Na't written by Hali's predecessors also continued as a tradition revolving round articulating the blessed traits and attributes of the beloved Prophet in subjective expression and the style of presentation in vogue. Hasrat, Iqbal Suhail and Jigar would continue with that. Nevertheless, Hali was an effective model for utilitarianism and purposiveness.[39]

2.4 Iqbal's Na't

The poets who followed Hali employed devotional poetry for political, social, economic and communal reformation in addition to its basic objective to infuse fervent love of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the entire Muslim Umma. Iqbal became the creator of this era. Iqbal's Na't, however, has an individuality of being altogether different from the formal conventional Na't; that is rather an exposition of the key concepts of the Deen of Islam. He has interpreted the fundamentals of Muslim Umma in the light of the Prophetic Seerah and morality. He has neither formatted his Na't in traditional formal style, nor had he maintained Na't as a title of any of his devotional verses. It was more a revelatory

[38] Ibid.

[39] Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fatehpuri, *Na't in Urdu Poetry, from Hali to date* Vol. I, p. 36–60.

experience with him than a mere exercise in ratiocination. His rapture of Na't sentiment has been kneaded into his poetic diction through an ecstatic semantic behaviour pouring down into his totality of verse either from some transcendental origin or sprouting out of his spiritual flight into the realms of celestial light and divinity. It would come down to him pre-arrayed in poetic form and content. Akhtar Shirani, Zafar Ali Khan, Jigar Moradabadi, Aziz Lukhnowi, Hafeez Jalandhari and a few others constituted this caravan, playing the spiritual tunes of Prophetic love, writing symphonies for a larger orchestra of Na't that would transpire soon.[40]

2.5 Na't Criticism

However, it is very strange that critical writings on Na't are comparatively scarce. Maulana Hali's *'Muqaddama-i-Sher-o-Shaeri'* is the first treatise in Urdu on the art and principles of literary criticism, but it reads nothing about Na't poetry. Ameer Minai's writings defending Mohsin Kakorvi are perhaps the first critical Urdu writings that discuss Na't on the basis of literary merits and poetic values. It was none other than Muhammad Hasan Askari who, while writing on Mohsin Kakorvi, brightened the way for the critics who were to write on the subject in the years to come.[41] But Askari is a bit unconvinced of the Na't elements in Hali's Musaddas. Since Askari had turned against modernists and Modernism, he felt that Hali had composed those stanzas from a Western and modernist point of view, praising certain aspects of the life and personality of the Prophet (ﷺ) that are more "humanistic" than "spiritual".

[40] Dr Rauf Parekh, History of Na't in Urdu, its Research and Criticism, DAWN, Dec 12, 2016.

[41] *Urdu Na't ki Shaeri Rivayet (Poetic Tradition of Urdu Na't)*, Sabih Rahmani, p. 14.

2.6 Sabih Rehmani's Account of Criticism

In his recently compiled and published book *Urdu Na't ki She'ri Riwayat* (*Poetic Tradition of Urdu Na't*), Sabih Rehmani has given an outline history of critical and research works carried out on Na't in Urdu. According to him, though now we have about 10 PhD and several M Phil and MA disquisitions and dissertations written on the genre of Na't in Urdu, Dr Rafi Uddin Ashfaq has the distinction of earning the first-ever PhD on a thesis researching and evaluating Urdu Na't poetry. University of Nagpur awarded him a doctorate in 1955 on his work "*Urdu main Na'tiya Shae'ri*". In 1974, Dr Farman Fatehpuri's book *Urdu ki Na'tiya Shaeri* was published from Karachi. Dr Talha Rizvi Barq's book *Urdu ki Na'tiya Shaeri* was published from India the same year. Apparently, both the scholars were unaware of each other's work while writing the book, and completed their research independently. In Pakistan, adds Sabih Rehmani, Dr Riaz Majeed penned "*Urdu main Na't Goi*", first doctoral dissertation in Pakistan on Na't, which was published in 1990.[42]

In his introduction to the book, Sabih Rehmani has given a thumbnail summary of the large number of critical and research works on Na't in Urdu. Published by Karachi's Academy Bazyaft, the tome consists of articles by renowned researchers and critics, expounding the definition, history, prospects and literary merits of Na't poetry in Urdu. Sabih Rehmani has given the credit to Mubeen Mirza for giving him the idea of compiling such a book. Indeed both the writers deserve kudos and our thanks for such a comprehensive work on Urdu Na't poetry.

[42] Ibid.

3. Phenomenology of the Transcendental Experience of Na't

3.1 Transcendence and Na't

A Na't poet, while feeling, imagining and expressing in words his contact with the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ, undergoes a transcendental experience which is angelic and divine in nature and not a worldly event; he becomes alien to the world in these creative moments. We have already seen it with Abu-al-Muttalib, Abu Talib, the venerated mother of the Prophet Syeda Amina, his foster mother Halima Sa'dia, Hassan b. Thabit and numerous other Na't poets of the Holy Prophet; they poured out noble tributes to the Prophet ﷺ in aesthetic format spontaneously; even the idols in the idol-houses and the walls of the Sacred House would drone and hum his glorification. That is absolutely a supernatural bliss enlivening this experience and an extrasensory activity.

3.2 The Reality of Muhammad ﷺ

We can well understand the phenomenon of the creative experience of Na't and a divine panegyric by a spiritual scan of Allama Iqbal's creative, linguistic, poetic experience; I call it a transcendental ecstatic experience. Here we must consider the creation of Muhammad ﷺ and his commissioning as the Final Messenger of Allah, the greatest divine event of the universe. The revelation of the Word of Allah, the Holy Qur'an again is an equally momentous and miraculous event of the terrestrial as well as celestial realms. According to the Word of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds preserved the

Qur'an in the "Protected Tablet", *Lauh-im-Mahfuz*, and sent it down into the heart of Muhammad and protected it there while Allah washed the sanctified heart of Muhammad ﷺ through the Archangel Gabriel (Jibril). This proves a divine connection between *Lauh-im-Mahfuz* and the Prophet's pristine heart. See the Qur'anic evidence:

﴿بَلۡ هُوَ قُرۡءَانٞ مَّجِيدٞ ٢١ فِي لَوۡحٖ مَّحۡفُوظِۭ ٢٢﴾

﴿It is indeed the Glorious Qur'an, (Inscribed) in the very Well-guarded Tablet (al-Lawh al-Mahfuz).﴾[43]

﴿قُلۡ مَن كَانَ عَدُوّٗا لِّجِبۡرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُۥ نَزَّلَهُۥ عَلَىٰ قَلۡبِكَ بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِ﴾

﴿Say: 'Whoever is an enemy to Jibril ([Gabriel] is doing injustice), because he is the one who has brought it (the Qur'an) down upon your heart only by Allah's command.﴾[44]

﴿أَلَمۡ نَشۡرَحۡ لَكَ صَدۡرَكَ ١﴾

﴿Have We not broadened your breast for you (for the light of knowledge, wisdom and spiritual gnosis)?﴾[45]

The Qur'an has also revealed that Muhammad, the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ travelled to the realm of light and divinity in the Ascension Night after a thorough heart-wash. All these events are transcendental, ecstatic and divine, unveiling the reality of Muhammad, Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ.

[43] Qur'an, 85:21–22.
[44] Ibid., 2:97.
[45] Ibid., 94:1.

3.3 A Jinn's Verses about Umm-e-M'abad

Ibn Hashsham has narrated in *al-Seerat al-Nabwiya* that Asma' ﵂, daughter of Abu Bakr ﵁ reported that she was deeply concerned about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and her father when they had left for Medina and there was no means to learn about their journey and safety. The Meccans were mad to find some clue and reach them but they only met frustration. In the meanwhile, a jinn passed Mecca's lower valley, reciting these verses that served a pointer to the Meccans about Umm-e-M'abad. The Jinn would loudly rhyme:

جَزَى اللهُ رَبّ النَّاسِ خَيْرَ جَزَائِهِ
رَفِيْقَيْنِ حَلَّا خَيْمَتَيْ أُمَّ مَعْبَدِ

Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, reward best,
Both companions who visited Umm-e-M'abad's tent

هُمَا نَزَلَا بِالْبِرِّ ثُمَّ تَرَوَّحَا
فَأَفْلَحَ مَنْ أَمْسَى رَفِيْقَ مُحَمَّدٍ

Both of them came for good and moved on,
He who accompanied Muhammad ﷺ, triumphed

لِيَهْنِ بَنِي كَعْبٍ مَكَانُ فَتَاتِهِمْ
وَمَقْعَدُهَا لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنِ بِمَرْصَدِ

Felicitations to the lady of Banu K'ab,
Blessed be her shelter and the safe stop[46]

[46] Ibn Hashsham, *al-Seerat al-Nabwiya*, 3:14.

Hearing the voice, people sprinted towards it but failed to find any reciter.

A Jinn is a supernatural creature. He observed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companion staying at Umm-e-M'abad's place. Pleased on the sight, the Jinn felt a Na't inside him that bloomed on his tongue and he started rhyming it around in a rapturous mood. The verses depict his character and love for the Prophet ﷺ. It seems ironical that he rhymed these verses loudly in the Meccan valley so that they could learn that the Prophet was on his way, safe and sound and out of their reach. He declared their failure. See the sentiment these verses have flashed.

That is Na't.

We need to meditate what phenomenon is at work when a Na't is produced by the idol, the Jinn or the K'aba walls.

3.4 Prose Na't Uttered by Umm-e-M'abad

On their way to Medina, when Allah's Messenger ﷺ accompanied by Abu Bakr ؓ reached Umm-e-M'abad's tentage, he enquired if some milk was available. Not knowing who she was talking to, she regretted and submitted that her goat was too feeble and spent to yield any milk. He asked her if she would allow him to milk it; she agreed. Allah's Messenger ﷺ prayed to Almighty Allah, then milked the cow and it milked so profusely that there was hardly any utensil in the tent left unfilled. Everyone there took milk to his fill and milk would not ebb.

When her husband returned and asked about copious milk, she voiced 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', uttering Na't fervently and fluently:

> "I saw a being with evident beauty, charming countenance and excellent noble conduct; didn't have a bulging belly that looks ugly, nor thin neck and small head seeming awkward; he was charismatic and highly beautiful. With big black

> eyes and long lashes, he had a booming voice. Shining neck and thick beard, with thin eyebrows joined together, would look honorable when quiet and glowing while talking, most gorgeous; impressive when distant and elegant, pretty and sweet when close. Clear while talking, would never utter anything meaningless, his speech was reeved pearls' downpour; medium height, neither imperfectly tall, nor inadequately short; a healthily green and comely branch amid two branches. His companions had encircled him, listening to him actively, doing what he said there and then. Everyone's master, venerable; neither bitter, nor disobeyed, nor opposed."[47]

Umm-e-M'abad saw him first time and then, overwhelmed, described him to her husband, uttering this prose-Na't. Whenever she mentioned him, she would call him "Mubarak" (مبارك). When she visited Medina to see him, her son, seeing Abu Bakr ﷺ there, said, "Mom, this is the man who was with 'Mubarak'; and he took them to 'Mubarak'. Later, the whole family embraced Islam.[48]

3.5 Iqbal's Revelatory Poetry and his Na't

Faqir Syed Waheeduddin writes in his inspiring book "*Ruzgar-i-Faqir*" Part-1:

> "Respected Doctor! How do you compose poetry? He said: Once an annual session was held in Forman Christian College Lahore and its Principal, Dr Locus, invited me to grace the occasion. Refreshments were served after the session. While

[47] Hakim, al-Mustadrak, 3:10–11, § 4274.
[48] al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:492.

> we were taking tea, Dr Locus came to me and asked not to leave without meeting him for an important matter. Then, after tea, he took me aside and asked: "Iqbal! Were the meanings and contents of the Qur'an revealed to your Prophet, and later, since he was an Arab, he supplied those meanings to the Arabic language, or was the Arabic text directly sent down upon him?" I said: "It was the text that was revealed to him." Feeling astonished, he said: "Iqbal! Despite being such a great scholar, you maintain that it was the text that was revealed to him!"[49]

I replied: "Dr Locus! Faith! My experience is that complete verses of poetry are sent down on me; then how was the text of the Qur'an not revealed to the Prophet as it is?"

Describing this incident, Iqbal enlightened us: "When the poetic excitement awakens my creative self, verses storm me and I write them down fast like a fisherman catching the fish. The fish so plentifully swarm the net that the fisherman becomes puzzled how to catch the whole lot. The verses flow into my mind at such a speed that I fear my hand fails writing some verses and missing some others."

I enquired: "Does this creative experience always happen to you the same way?" He said: "No. It happens to me once or twice a year. However, this affluence continues for several hours and I keep taking it down. Amazing! When second episode occurs, its first verse is always semantically connected with the last verse of the preceding occurrence even after months' gap as if they are interconnected links of a chain. When this creative experience ends, I feel fatigued and consumed."

After a pause, he said: "Once the intervening gap extended over 5 to 6 years. I started feeling as if Allah had taken this

[49] Faqir Syed Waheeduddin *Roozgar-i-Faqir* Part-1.

blessing away from me, and turned towards writing prose. Yet it came and captured me all of a sudden. What a pleasure it sent inside me. I felt like a sea in commotion and the transcendental delight lasted so long that it made up the dearth of 6 to 7 years."

Saying that, he again paused and then said: "The famous German poet Goethe wrote in a book what he shared with his friends: 'When I read the translation of the Qur'an, my soul trembles in my body. In truth, when a poet reads the Word of Allah, he finds his soul compatible with its meanings. He feels a quiver inside him, others do not."[50]

Here again I should mention the infinite meanings of the hadith of Allah's Beloved Messenger that "Allah Most High indeed helps Hassan through the Holy Spirit" in writing Na't. That is an irrefutable evidence of the transcendental nature of the creative and aesthetic experience Na't is! Rather it is from Almighty Allah, as the hadith reads: إنَّ اللهَ تَعَالَى يُؤَيِّدُ حَسَّانَ that Allah indeed helps Hassan.

3.6 Sabih Rehmani's Poetic Quiver

We observe such a creative state of poetic tremor in Sabih as well. Just look at the transcendental aesthetics that wrapped him and his soul trembled inside him and found a unique poetic expression right bowing before "*Mawaja Sharif*". He very kindly included it in his poetic collection Jada-i-Rehmat. "I am before him!" What words they are and what inner shudder of love, devotion and the feeling of humbling before the most praised 'Muhammad' ﷺ the lauded servant of al-Rahman, His beloved Final Prophet these words enshrine!

3.6.1 We, in attendance, at Mawaja

"ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم"

[50] Faqir Syed Waheeduddin, *Roozgar-i-Faqir* Part-1.

Can I dare say: "I am before him—Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ!" or "in his presence" or "in his sight" what to talk of being "face to face" and other dictionary meanings that I cannot dare quote. Allama Iqbal trembled and implored the Almighty: از نگاہِ مصطفٰے پنہاں بگیر; "O Lord! Keep me masked from Your Beloved's sight; I cannot face him." He sees through us and discerns all our rubbishes, bunks and worthless doings. When we approach his door of mercy and collect our dispersed self to bow before "*Mawaja*" or "before him" or "in his presence" firmly conscious that "I am in his sight now"! Oh God! What face I have to show? How can I? Why not to hide it? And if I hide it with hands, what hands are there? The polluted hands! If I cover my shameful face with my sin-polluted hands, how can I show my hands? Here, the tears of repentance come to my rescue, pour down and submit my sobbing confessions. My eye-founts gush and flow with penitence and cover my face and hands. So that is the one and only possibility standing "before him", "before *Mawaja*", sobbing, wailing, begging and after submitting my salutations and greetings, can I stay on in front of him, face down, motionless and prone. His infinite mercy showers on me and my tears snatch from me my eyes; I cannot see anything. Bowing down, unable to lift up my face and shedding tears alone! That is my momentary presence "before him". Can I submit my requests and put before him my excuses, petitions and prayers? Yes but without words. Here, tears alone are my language, my words and expression of my inner feelings that beggar description. Sabih sighs: "I am before him!"

کھویا کھویا ہے دل، ہونٹ چپ، آنکھ نم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم
روبرو ان کے لایا ہے اُن کا کرم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم

Heart entranced, lips silent, eyes moistened, we in attendance; His largesse has transported us before His Highness at Mawaja.

لمحے لمحے پہ آیات کا نور ہے نعت کا نور ہے
نور افشاں، درودی فضا دم بہ دم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم

Every moment glowing with effulgence of Ayah and Na'ts, Drood-filled ambience, spurting light every breath, we, at Mawaja.

ایک کونے میں ہیں، سر جھکائے ہوئے، منہ چھپائے ہوئے
گردنیں بھی ہیں بارِ ندامت سے خم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم

Perched in a corner, head bent in reverence, hiding face in remorse, Necks weighed down by repentance, at Mawaja, we in attendance.

آنسوؤں کی زباں، کر رہی ہے بیاں، ان سے احوال جاں
صرف اپنا نہیں پوری امت کا غم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم

The language of tears, voicing to Him the self's plight, Not singularly mine, the whole Umma's disquiet, we at *Mawaja*.

مسکراتی ہوئی ہر تجلی ملی، کیا تسلی ملی
دور ہوتے گئے سارے رنج و الم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم

Perceived each divine exposure smiling; what a consolation! All agony and anguish deleted at Mawaja, we in attendance.

سب طلب گار حرفِ شفاعت کے ہیں، اُن کی رحمت کے ہیں
چہرے چہرے پہ ہے اک سوال کرم، ہیں مواجہ پہ ہم

All plead for a word of His Intercession, His mercy,
Every face begging for beneficence, at Mawaja we are present.

3.6.2 The Phenomenon gifted to Sabih Rehmani

Such a deep feeling of presence with all the senses of the secret-self awoke, disconnected from the physical sense of contact with the world around, and the inner vocal self in full bloom, receiving the spiritually formulated language of thoughts and sentiments of devotion, love and humbleness, and seeking an everlasting contact with the holy footsteps of the beloved Messenger's ﷺ blessed door, munificent, effulgent and blissful, in the format of poetry, rhyme, rhythm and cadence, measure and line length and poetic diction received as charity—is the genre of literature called Na't, devotional poetry or the Prophet's adoration, praise, love and defence poetry. Promoting it requires spread of sincere love, piety, allegiance of love, obedience, reverence and humble service pledged with the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the firm commitment to devote every moment of life to enhance the remembrance of the holy Prophet ﷺ everywhere around you.

That is the phenomenon conferred on Sabih as an in-built gift. Muhammad's ﷺ fervent and sincere love is a miracle-producing energy. Things which normal science of dynamism, procedures, management, administration and probabilities declare impossible start transpiring. Such things are, in fact, predestined. They are undertaken and executed by the Prudent Divine Forces because Allah has sworn by the "pen to write" what He decrees. I have explained this phenomenon as well in the following pages.

4. *Nun w'al-Qalam* Phenomena

﴿By the pen and by that which (the angels) write down!﴾

According to Ibn Asakar, Abu Hurayra ﷺ has narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: Almighty Allah created pen before everything else. Then He created *Nun*, the inkpot. Almighty Allah has said:

نٓ وَٱلۡقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسۡطُرُونَ ۝١

'Nun. (Only Allah and the Messenger ﷺ know the real meaning.) By the pen and by that (subject) which (the angels) write down!"[51]

Then He commanded the pen to write. It submitted: what to write? Write whatever has transpired and what actions, deaths and signs have to happen (until the Last Day). The pen started writing and it wrote all (the occurrences, coincidences, fortunes, misfortunes, calamities and disasters that have to take place until the Last Day. Allah then stamped the pen, following which it could not speak, nor would it be able to utter anything until Resurrection. Allah then created reason and said: I have not created anything more unique than you. I take an oath of My Glory that I will make you perfect in what pleases Me and will make you imperfect in what displeases Me.[52]

According to the exegeses, the pen wrote knowledge which Allah would impart, the provisions He would give, the signs He would create, the creation he would originate and generate and the results and repercussions that would come

[51] Qur'an, 68:1.

[52] Ibn Asakar, *Tareekh Medina Damishq*, 56:208.

about until the Day of Judgment. The pen wrote all that and kept writing, and is busy writing and will keep persistently writing. It wrote the signs of all the eras and epics of time. It wrote the creation of first human and the later perfections when prophets were created and then wrote their conditions, environments, events, actions, moral excellence and history. It then wrote the raising of the Last of the Messengers, his signs, instances and events. Then it wrote about his Caliphs, their followers and the pious luminaries and saints and our Master the Chief Helper, Ghaus-e-Azam.

Almighty Allah has awarded the favour and benefit of His oath to all the eras with the grace of His exalted Messenger's sacred footwear. Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi received it; Imam Shafe'i, Umar b, Abd al-Aziz got it; Imam Fakhruddin Razi, Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, Imam Maturidi collected it; all the Imams, scholars, jurists, and all the revivalists were blessed with this favor of Allah's oath. And our era, awaiting the favor, got it through Shaykh-ul-Islam's erudition, expertise, vision and his power to bring about developments wherever he plans and executes.

What a sacred pen that has written one thousand books! What a blessed inkpot that affects and effects his writing process! Neither the pen nor the inkpot is his. Both the pen and inkpot is donated to him by Allah's exalted Messenger ﷺ. Pen writes when it is given the command and the inkpot is the ardent love of the Holy Prophet, the contact with Medina, the humble service to the members of the Prophet's household, the sincere and most humble love for the Chief of Women of Paradise, the Messenger's most venerated and glorified daughter and maddening love for 'Ali and Hasnain Kremain رضی اللہ عنہم. This inkpot is love for 'Ali and love for Abu Bakr and 'Umar and 'Uthman رضی اللہ عنہم.

5. Na't Rang and the Oath on the Pen and that which the Angels Write Down!

The Na't poetry being created to venerate and extol the glory of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ has expanded beyond horizons in modern times. A tradition that morphed into a movement has now advanced into a creative revolution in a short period of only three decades. And the span of time and space stretched out for this flash flood of sacred passion to express the Prophetic love in aesthetic attire—the infinite realm of allusive words, strata of meanings, figurative structures and thought and sentiment weaving techniques shooting out from poetic imagination and the ecstatic heart and soul of the divine being garbed in Muhammad's ﷺ love-slavery. The divine pen is downright immersed in the writing surges decreed by the divine will under the oath: By the inkpot and by the pen: نٓ وَٱلۡقَلَمِ![53]

5.1 An Eyewitness on Sabih Rehmani from the Courtyard of Prophetic Mosque

According to *Safeer-e-Na't*, Sabih Rehmani number, the late Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi wrote from the courtyard of Prophetic Mosque the picturesque view of the showering blessings upon Sabih Rehmani. Dr Kashfi felt a divine love for Sabih. He observed in a startling manner Sabih's affinity with the threshold of Allah's beloved Prophet ﷺ.

[53] Qur'an, 68:1.

"Viewing the Prophet's Green Mausoleum or beholding the horizon, space and the heavens stretched in its backdrop, I was pondering how was the Mausoleum reshaping the chemistry and constitution of the horizon when a title of Na't Rang dawned on the screen of my imagination. The creation reminds of the creator; and Sabih Rehmani is right now with me in the illumining compound of the Prophetic mosque.

Being in the court of love is an amazingly absorbing and dazzlingly bright experience. Whether physically with me or not, I have felt Sabih always, hand in hand, beside me. Our beloved Messenger of Almighty Allah ﷺ has been a bridge of love and affection between us the faithful for last over 14 centuries …. The basis of my relation with Sabih Rehmani is Medina, the possessor of Medina and the Lord of Muhammad ﷺ. This relation is pure of any impurities….Milk was a favourite drink of the holy Prophet. He would say: it is a drink as well as a nutritious diet. He called the underfed Abu Hurayra ؓ and got the bowl of milk served to the people of Suffa by him who kept imagining what he would get! And then he felt satiated. The delight of drinking to the fill bears just no comparison to the blissful feeling of satiation. The holy Prophet ﷺ took it in the end. It is indeed a miracle but symbolic of the Day of Reckoning, the Kausar-Basin and the thirst-ridden Community of the Prophet ﷺ.

It is this pure milk that is galvanizing me and Sabih Rehmani in the Prophetic mosque. Ten years is not a short period but I feel Sabih has always been with me. A few golden moments spent in *Qadmain Sharif* (the holy revered feet) seem eternal and if mutual relationship is based on Prophetic love, it becomes everlasting.

During the days of my illness in last few months, Sabih would visit me like the message of convalescence—a fresh stimulus of creativity; saying: What will you write now? You have written everything. He would say: It is not you who write; pen is certainly your, but someone brings you

thoughts—now satire and then feeling to admire. And that is how Sabih made me write 'Na't's luster in Ghazal' and other discourses. He is inspiration incarnate! Sabih's trust in God is a manifestation of his relatedness to the holy Prophet ﷺ. He is a sign of Allah's glory, mercy and largesse.

And today Sabih Rehmani is waiting for blessings in the courtyard of Prophetic mosque. He is supplication personified; **let us see what he is bestowed upon!**"[54]

[54] Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi, '*From the Courtyard of Prophetic Mosques', Safeer-e-Na't, Sabih Rehmani Number*, p. 19.

6. What Happened and How

6.1 Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi Explores Sabih Rehmani

Writing on Jada-i-Rehmat, Dr Kashfi has narrated in his own captivating style how he explored Sabih Rehmani.

"Somewhere in 1992, a sitting was arranged at my residence to celebrate the praise and adoration of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Na'ts were being recited by the glorifiers and it was being felt that the citizens of the city of mercy were proceeding on their journey on the way of mercy. This combination of stay and journey at one place was the blessing of his remembrance. The most honourable Name of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ exercises its control over time and space in this very manner.

And while it is He alone besides whom there is no God, the name of Messenger of Allah ﷺ comes in harmony with His Name.

In this sitting was there an associate who was a stranger. This world is a strange puzzle. The people who we live and work with it is suddenly revealed concerning them that there is nothing common between us. It also happens that in the region of mercy, while covering the distance treading the path of mercy we come across people for whom nothing remains concealed of our outer and inner aspects. Every occurrence becomes a transparent screen; ins and outs become clearly visible. Such persons at times meet at Arafat, and sometimes, they sit beside us in the Masjid al-Haram. Sometimes, at Mawaja Sharif, it is so felt that salutations and greetings they invoke on the beloved Prophet ﷺ are perfuming the lips of some others, while, in truth, it is our own lips dipped in that

love-hue. And at some light-flooded moment they themselves visit your apartment robed in love flame. They are the people who fuel us to keep us ablaze with devotion and arterial feelings of nearness of Allah's Messenger ﷺ in our hearts. They are the voice that provides warmth to the bosoms and they are the fraternity concerning whom the Holy Qur'an says:

﴿إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ﴾

﴿The truth is that (all) believers are brothers (to one another).﴾[55]

In the sitting, while this stranger started reciting a Na't, it was felt that the atmosphere had become more brightened and the waves of fragrance more swift. His voice began to shower the dew drops on the flowers of Ahmad's and Mahmud's love [the Messenger of Allah ﷺ] that had budded in the compound of heart.

In this sitting Maulana 'Abdur Rashid Nu'mani was also present. The tears in his eyes like glowing stars were expressing the state of affairs of his heart but the word of appreciation which casually happened to come out of his lips had been: Very good, most correct; quiet right, concerning every line of the Na't being recited by the stranger friend. And these words of appreciation also added ecstasy to the atmosphere. This word was a declaration of observing the limits of the requirements of Shari'a even at a moment of being away from one's own self or in a state of being lost…; "tha", "hay", and "ho ga" represent the past, the present and the future spread up to the Day of Judgment and thereafter; there is the present which is the name of permanence and it is that permanence which is termed as Jannat (the Garden/the Paradise).

[55] Qur'an, 49:10.

Verse after verse, it was being felt that this "Na't" was a ladder of love and remembrance of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). It appeared a stair case which we were climbing up step by step. Listening to it was elevating our ranks from the raising of the steps (*raf'al-aqdam*) to the raising up of the ranks (*raf'al- maratib*).

Recitation of "Na't" came to an end. All the audience observed silence for a while. This silence was, in fact, the real token of appreciation; they were spell-bound. The last verse disclosed the title of the poet.

After a little while I asked: My dear! Who is the author of this "Na't"?

The reciter answered modestly: It is my composition.

What is your full name?

Sabih Rehmani.

Looking at your age, I thought it was a "Na't" written by someone else.

Respected Sir, I am twenty six year old.

I again seriously looked towards Sabih Rehmani. The young man looking no more than seventeen or eighteen years was telling that he was twenty six years. Of course, where there is no apprehension of any darkness, the time comes to a standstill. Ordinary postures appear extraordinary. Away in the depths of the existence of this young man the lamps that were lit were showering rays thereof on his discernible personage. The whole scene was bright enough. Yet peeping into the inside beauty was but required.

This was my introduction with Sabih Rehmani, the poet of Jada-i-Rehmat. Thereafter, Sabih Rehmani used to visit me occasionally and I encouraged him to be frequent. We both had no vested interest from each other. The most honourable name of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had become a joining bridge between us just as this very name links and will continue to link the two Muslim societies. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is on the one side having link with Allah and, on the

other, he is among the humankind. This fact is not limited to this extent alone. He is the means (*al-wasilah*) of fraternization and unity among Muslims. And his link is well established with every individual.

Sabih Rehmani keeps this reality in view in the matter of his link with others that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the attractive force and the power to maintain integrity of the nation. While writing these lines, it struck me that we are all the leaves and branches of the tree of Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and to remain linked with him is the only way for our survival and eternity.

6.2 Sabih Rehmani on the Right Path

Sabih Rehmani had by now several meetings with Dr Kashfi. He kept a spiritual eye on him and did whatever mentors do. Where did Na't stand as a genre of literature, what were the requirements for its literary evolution and how could a young energetic and spiritually gifted young man like Sabih Rehmani go about it were the questions that had been settled between them. Sabih disclosed in one of his interviews with Syed Ghulam Mujtaba Ahadi on the Rah-e-Najat channel:

> "Once, in reply to one of my questions, Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi said that since the Prophet's Na't has not been evaluated with the yardsticks of literary criticism, it has not attained its due position and stature in the history of literature. This lit my heart and soul and showed me the right path to follow. It fixed my mind to achieve the major objective: to morph Na't from mere traditional religious versification into a poetic genre of Urdu literature, which can only be accomplished by striving on war footings to establish Na't as a literary genre, subjecting it to the principles of literary criticism. I mulled this proposition and launched a search for friends who could join and stay with me in the

struggle as a team and brave the hardships on the way to the discernible destination."

6.3 Dr Kashfi's Legacy for Sabih Rehmani

Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi wrote a book "*The Literature and Literary Writer of our Time*" (ہمارے عہد کا ادب اور ادیب) which was published in December 1971. It reveals close literary relations of Dr Kashfi with the men of letters, the respect and reverence they would extend to each other and his critical essays on some renowned Urdu writers and poets which, according to him, he wrote with great avidity because literature for him was, those days, a sweet craze for him, the craze that he is now looking for.

In the foreword, Dr Abu al-Laith writes:

> "The tragedy of our time is the divide of life into water-tight compartments with zero mutual contact and coordination. We live with the decision that tasks assigned to one are not meant for another. Preaching Islam is meant for religious Ulama, while teaching in universities and institutions are only the pigeon of professors and scholars. This divide has resulted into a youth of the nation not well versed with the religion that forms the kernel of our national life; they have a blurred vision.[56]

Thank God a group of educationists has emerged to perceive and own the responsibility to equip our students with the religious, moral and social education to play a dynamic role in bringing about a conscientious performance by all the departments of life. They have fulfilled this duty through poetry, criticism, journalism and various other

[56] Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi, *Hamarey Ehad ka Adab awr Adib—The Literature and Literary Writer of our Time.*

creative means to engage the younger generation in healthier pursuits. One of these fortunate people is Abu al-Khair Kashfi who has strived to grow himself into a person, deeply in love with Islam, its dignity and Muslim nationhood in the form of a teacher, writer and critic. He is a renowned figure amongst Urdu literary circles. He has a vast horizon of criticism in view and seems to win his goal, for he has the required talent for that.

Dr Kashfi authored some valuable books on Na't criticism that substantially contributed to Na't's literary status and effectively convinced the literary intellectuals and thinkers to turn towards this sacred struggle. Here are some of his books:

- *Na't Shanasi*, (Identifying Na't) compiled by Dr Daud Usmani
- *Na't awr Tanqeed-e-Na't* (Na't and its Criticism)
- *Urdu Adab mein Zikr-e-Nabi*—Prophet's ﷺ Remembrance in Urdu Literature

Awais Ahmed Adeeb is another eminent scholar who has expressed views about Abu-al-Khair's talents, mentioning his dynamic activities as a student in Haleem Muslim College. His effective coordination with Baba-i-Urdu Dr Abd al-Haq, Sir Abd-al-Qadir, journalist and writer Munshi Daya Narain Nigam, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and other prominent writers made possible the organizing of Urdu Conference. He wished him success both as an author and a compiler. This book also reflects his contacts with brains like Firaq Gorakhpuri, Niaz Fatehpuri and Hasan Askari and many more famous literary thinkers, critics and writers.

6.3.1 A Glimpse of Dr Kashfi's Erudition

He has disclosed in the book that he has derived most of the material from "An Introduction to Literary Criticism" by Danziger and Stacy Johnson, while examples are his original besides additions. That reflects his firm grip on literature and his literary scholarship. However, profoundly religious, he is

on the top of the list of staunch Muslim critics; the progressive movement in Urdu literature could not influence him a bit. He was blessed with proclivity, aesthetic perception, and standard literary criticism besides rich analytical mind, modern thought and the study of the Qur'an. His concept of literature was tenaciously connected with Islam's dynamic values. That made him an affluent source of the promotion of religiosity in literature and a trainer of new generation in literature imbued with Prophetic love. His tall personality proved the sole critic of Na't literature and with the force of his cogent and persuasive reasoning, hurled the literary folk towards Na't poetry. He started a series of linguistic discussions to manifest the covert beauty of Na't as a genre of literature. He authored some classic books to lay the foundations of Na't literary criticism. "Na't and Na't Criticism" and "Na't Identification" are especially significant, for they provide you a vision to discern what Na't is and what it is not. To know his vital role in the genetics of criticism and research of modern Na't, Sabih Rehmani's compilation "Na't Nagar ka Basi" is a reference book.

As mentioned above, his book *"The Literature and Literary Writer of our Time"* (ہمارے عہد کا ادب اور ادیب) was published in 1971 and was certainly in the making phase in the preceding few years. These were the two decades (1960s and 70s) when these traditional writers and critics were busy contributing their bit to Urdu literature. However, they did awake to Na't as well as creative literature, not very active and bounteous though. You can now perceive the scenario when Dr Kashfi saw Sabih Rehmani, recognized the educated, talented and energetic Na't lover in him and decided to put him on the right track.

So he knew the real literary status of Urdu Na't, belonging to the traditional school of thought though. Here we should know the people who formed a circle of traditional critics. They were active as literary critics but did not write about

Na't. Yet a few of them did write on critical appreciation of Na't as well. Dr Abu-al-Khair's advice to Sabih Rehmani unveiled a reality which we need to understand in full to evaluate Sabih's work in totality and visualize its historical stature. Nor was this work a one-man show. Therefore, it requires a comprehensive record as it has made a history.

With all these heartening developments, criticism remained the domain of Urdu literary writers while no Na't poet attempted to take the literary critical line so far, except Hali who wrote his *Muqaddama-i-Sher-o-Shaeri* which was a document of vital significance but lacked in scientific examination of Na't as a literary genre. Muhammad Hasan Askari's most celebrated essay on Mohsin Kakorvi has been another milestone in Urdu Na't criticism published in 1959. This scenario expanded upon five decades and continued until the creation of Pakistan.

Dr Aziz Ahsan has comprehensively taken an account of literary criticism in his book *Urdu Na'tia Adab mein Intiqadi Sarmai ka Tehqiqi Mutaliah*—Research in Criticism of Na't Literature and has mentioned several celebrities who promoted criticism of Urdu literature. Some of them are Dr Sajjad Baqir Rizvi, Syed Waqar Azeem, Jilani Kamran, Dr Ibadat Barelvi, Dr Farman Fatehpuri, Dr Sajid Amjad, and Dr Syed Abd Allah and so on. Had they considered Na't as a literary genre, Na't would have attained to its real literary status. This Himalayan task came to the shoulders of Sabih Rehmani, as decreed by the Prudence.

7. Na't in Pakistan, Sabih's Vision

After the establishment of Pakistan, Na't progressed by leaps and bounds. Its promotion, printing and publishing was a pleasant development in our national life. That was, in fact, predestined. Pakistan movement was nothing but an avid pursuit of Islamic identity. Na't gained popularity through free and frequent Milad and Na't gatherings. However, this sacred, revered and popular poetry could not attain a distinguished literary status among the genres of Urdu poetry for the sole reason that no work on Na't criticism gained any ground.

In his scholarly written book on *Pakistan mein Urdu Na't ka Adabi Safar*—"*The Literary Journey of Urdu Na't in Pakistan*" Dr Aziz Ahsan has revealed that 45 Na't books were published between the years 1957–66. Independence did play a role in the awakening of Na't poetic trend amongst Muslims in Pakistan. Slowly and gradually this trend strengthened and prospered. Mahir al-Qadri, Hafeez Jalandhari, Behzad Lukhnowi, Allama Zia al-Qadri Badayuni, Simab Akbarabadi, Asar Sehbai, Akhtar al-Hamidi, Adeeb Raipuri and a few more became the pioneers of Pakistani Na't poets. All these poets were thoroughly aware of the Na't proprieties and subtleties of poetic veneration of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. With conventional verve and poetic technique, they produced Na't and established their names. Abdul Aziz Khalid, Hafiz Ludhyanwi, Sagher Siddiqui, Jafar Tahir, Ihsan Danish and Hafiz Mazharuddin were those who paid special attention to Na't's aesthetic value, enriched and expanded diction of Urdu Na't and fostered semantics and styles according to their respective

poetic disposition, experience, expression and tastes. They made valuable and lasting contributions to Na't (panegyrics) and played a historic role in adding to its creative and aesthetic presentation. The number of books produced in 1967–76 rose to 70, while new poets were also introduced to this activity. The number of new books written in 1977–86 was 230. That shows the speedy progress of Na't poets in these years. Hilal Jafari, Hafeez Taib, Raja Rasheed Mahmood, Masroor Kaifi, Muzaffar Warsi, Khalid Ahmed, Iqbal Azeem, Raghib Moradabadi, Hanif As'adi, Hafiz Afzal Faqir, Asar Zubairi and their contemporary poets worked on Na't with their own peculiar literary penchant and created a rainbow of brilliant colours of love, devotion, humility and aesthetic emotionality longing for their close affiliation with the blessed doorsteps of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. That is how Na't reached the last decade of the preceding century.[57]

[57] Dr Aziz Ahsan, *Pakistan mein Urdu Na't ka Adabi Safar—The Literary Journey of Urdu Na't in Pakistan*.

8. Bringing out "Na't Rang"

We have learnt in the preceding pages the spirituality, divinity and Allah's oath on pen at work for writing the divine decrees in the universe. The Prophet's Na't is specifically a divine course of exalting and heightening the remembrance of Allah's Messenger in the world.

﴿وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ﴾

﴿And We exalted for you your remembrance.﴾[58]

Dr Kashfi wrote from the courtyard of Prophet's Mosque: "Let us see what Sabih is conferred upon." Then how the events transpired towards his eventual mainstay is quite evident. This is a divine arrangement beyond any doubt. Dr Kashfi proved himself a divine source of guidance for him. He mentored him and bestowed upon him whatever he had collected with diligence, hard work and spiritual insight. Thus far, I have expanded upon all these divine arrangements.

I have also dwelt upon Na't, taking it a transcendental experience, pursuing proximity of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ for his and Allah's pleasure and acquiring a granite solid faith and trust in God and His Messenger's venerable station. The inspiration to express in luminous words the sacred love and feel the aesthetic undercurrents of the language of love is more intuitional and ecstatic than an exercise in the art of linguistic creativity. True that creative expression is an upshot of poetic semantics cloaked in diction; yet its facticity reveals an activity at a higher plain of the unconscious and the mystery of the secret self of the poet, where even supernatural elements also get in.

[58] Qur'an, 94:4.

The physical and psychic human apparatus, however, serves its base and operates the creative dynamism of human experience in aesthetics. Whether emotive or cognitive, the love poetry for the exalted Messenger of Allah ﷺ is a human experience in expression and communication in the form of language, figurative or plain. Poetry is an art but language is a science which is employed to create the art.

This is also not uncertain that expression and communication entails the inevitability of reception and more so when it soothes, eases, and calms the human anxieties and generates and promotes peace, harmony, integration and amity amongst humans. Pledging allegiance of love to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ engenders the dynamic force that reduces social distances and brings about fraternization of society. It spreads the characteristics of Prophetic Model of Seerah that facilitates alleviation of negative forces detrimental to noble conduct and socio-economic progress of the community. Na't is, therefore, much more than mere an exercise in producing poetic art.

9. Preparatory Phases of Sabih Rehmani's Architectural Role in Modern Na't

9.1 All by himself

When Sabih Rehmani found the right path to somehow work for the scientific advancement of the art of Na't poetry and enlighten and educate the Na't poets and scholars to identify it as a genre of Urdu poetic art. In promoting perspicacity about literary Na't and rouse a consciousness towards investigation and research of its history, process of growth, contributory factors, elements of lingual aesthetics and tools to be employed to strive for meeting the international standards, he found he was all by himself. When I spoke to him on this aspect of flying solo and asked him about any feasibility study for his work plan to achieve the laid down objective, he uttered a loud and clear 'NO'. Financial loneliness explains everything. His was a flabbergasting position.

This assignment was, in fact, a will of God not fixed but awarded to him piecemeal. He was young, energetic and proactive who nature was preparing for an undeclared sacred task. This project was contingent only upon his personal human resources—thrown into deep waters to propel through commotions to the shore.

9.2 His Brought-up, Job, Education and Creative Diligence

In 1983, he joined Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation after passing his Matric examination; he was just 17. He kept struggling for the enhancement of his education while being in service, attending college and university in the morning and joining his duties in the afternoon until midnight; he graduated from University of Karachi, in 1987. Qualifying Master' degree in Urdu in 1998, he joined ARY as Research Director. See how, in the intervening years, he elbowed through the trying phases of the dynamics of his strenuous self-application:

- His creative self never slackened. His first Na't book, Mah-e-Taybah, came out in 1989 and second book, Jada-i-Rehmat, was published in 1993.
- The divine love he was endowed with had lit his heart with the poetic intuition, while his creative imagination was a boon of nature that would enrich his prose and poetry with magnetizing words and ideas to draw in a Na't world of his own.
- He kept composing Na't that brought him into the limelight and he glittered with fame in the age of just 22 years.
- A list of his creative works has been appended at the end of this book.
- The sincere and fervent love of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ indeed makes you work wonders and perform miracles.

Hafeez Taib anxiously observed:

> "I am amazed; how is he acquainted with the proprieties of Prophetic love when he is so young? Who has taught him the language of divine love at such a tender stage? What blessed environment has fostered him? And how come he knows how to

infuse sentiments into words which he so innocently articulates?

خدا ہی جانے ہمیں کیا خبر کہ کب سے ہے
جو اُن کے ذکر کا رشتہ ہمارے لب سے ہے

"God knows and I know not since when, His remembrance has embroidered my lips."

He started composing Na't since his Primary School days in 1973. He was in grade seven, just 12 or 13 year old when he composed this Na't and recited:

بند آنکھوں سے طیبہ نظر آ گیا
میں کہاں سے چلا تھا کدھر آ گیا

Just incredible! An adolescent of 13, saying:

"I beheld Medina with eyes closed; whence I started and where I ended up!"

He attended Na't Programs of Radio Pakistan in 1983-4 when he was only 19 years old. There he met the famous singer and music director Mehdi Zaheer who recognized his talent and imparted to him the basics of the art of singing. That boosted his proclivity for Na't reciting, and he mastered it.

It was 1991–92 when Sh Muhammad Ilahi organized a Na't gathering on STN private TV Channel where Sabih participated as a Na't poet as well as a Na't reciter. There he recited his famous Na't and leapt to fame:

کوئی مثل مصطفیٰؐ کا کبھی تھا نہ ہے نہ ہو گا
کسی اور کا یہ رتبہ کبھی تھا نہ ہے نہ ہو گا

"The like of Mustafa was never to be, nor is and never shall be,
Such an exalted station of someone was never to be, nor is and never shall be."

10. Nature Fosters the Tulip

Since then Na't Mushairas (poetic gatherings) miss the spiritual excitement in his absence, and he is always regularly invited to TV programs which he, for the sake of his audience, would never miss. When he first appeared in PTV program, celebrities like Jamil-ud-Din Aali, Iqbal Azeem, Hanif As'adi, Tabish Dehlvi and Sehr Ansari had also graced the occasion. They warmly appreciated Sabih's Na't poetry and admired his art and quality of Na't recitation. Soon his melodious voice went viral and he became the most popular Na't melodizer in Na't programs.

Muhammad Qamar Khan Rehmani, the Chairman Gul Bahar Na't Council Trust especially drew near him and imparted to him training in Na't recitation and enlightened him on the secrets of the art. Other very kind and dignified people who especially played their role in polishing his talent included Iqbal Qadri, Syed Miraj Jami, Nayyar Madni, Wafa Kanpuri, Sharif Amrohwi and Abdul Waheed Taj. When Gul Bahar Na't Council Trust decided to bring out its Na't journal "Lailat-un-Na't" in 1987, they requested Sabih Rehmani to patronize it while Syed Nisar Ali Qadri was the President administration. Other constituent members included Shabnam Aqeel Abbasi, Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, Syed Zahid Ali Qadri, Muhammad Rafiq Siddiqui, Muhammad Kamran Mirza and a few others holding important portfolios.

10.1 Melodizing Na't and the Poetic Style

Sabih Rehmani, now a Na't reciter of world renown, employed his talent of melodizing the Prophet's glory in his love-ridden tunes and would enjoy imbuing the hearts of his

moved audiences with the love surge that would overwhelm them and take them out of themselves. Hearing his enchanting intonations, the audience would feel a strong concord between their heart-beat and Rehmani's melodized soul-stirring lyrics. That begets a state of oneness between the reciter and the listeners as if their galvanizing emotions are lent a tongue reciting a spell. See how Sarah Kazmi, the English translator of Sabih Rehmani's poetc work "Revernce unto his ﷺ Feet", describes her spiritually ecstatic experience of hearing Sabih's melodious chants:

> "Verily, Allah has granted him such visionary eyes that he can not only 'see through' our passions but make them communicable, as emphatically as possible. He has aptly translated our delicate nuances into words…and then onwards, not only "Allah Karam", but the miscellaneous renditions by Mr Rehmani became a staple ingredient of my 'auditory' diet."[59]

Recitation has a divinity that brightens our souls. When we sudy the holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sira, we find the Sira of the beloved Messenger, portraying the Qur'an in an aesthetic parlance, sublime style and melodiously rhymed expression, compacting layers of meanings in each letter, word and phrase. This was due to the relish and savor of the divine penchant of the Qur'an that when the Messenger of Allah would recite it at night, the disbelievers of Mecca would cling like lizards to the outer walls of his sacred abode. They used to listen to the word of Allah, feeling amazed on its superhuman lure and the divine verve, contained in its unparalleled rhyme, rhythm and melody. This was a lyrically and pleasantly voiced expression of the supreme beauty of his life conduct as a role model for humanity. If glimpsed in the reciters' art of articulating and enunciating the Qur'an even

[59] Sarah Kazmi, "Revernce unto His a Feet", p. 6.

today, the whole world seems to be spell bound, enchanted by the Prophetic melodies permeating the enthused hearing of not only humans but the birds, animals and plants as well—as if all have held their breath.

The Na't melody too has an entrancing effect upon the audience. It is, in fact, the spiritual current inherently kinetic in the panegyrics of the beloved Messenger of Allah that affetcs humans magically.

The melodious presentation of Na't to the audience has a creative benefit for the Na't reciter if he is a Na't poet at the same time. The melodious delivery to the audience of Na't affects the quality of thought, diction, flow and fluency that stand out as salient requisites of a poet's creative experience. Na't reciting (singing) is a unique experience; it fulfils these requisites and enables a poet to generate a similar impact on his readers as well. A poet reciter, as Sabih Rehmani is, remains free of ambiguity and complexity because he has to rouse crowds' emotions and affect their feelings by sentimental notes, straight gestures, cadence, magic of melody and rhyming sensations. That state of mind is a gift for a Na't poet. Emotionality in collaboration with religiosity becomes a key to their popularity as an excellent poet, for people understand him so well because he uses simple language fully charged with the sacred love sentiments. Sabih Rehmani is blessed with this gift by nature and has been garlanded with admiration and approval by his readers.

10.2 Lailat-un-Na't

With his evening job and morning education program continued, patronizing "Lailat -un-Na't" equipped 22 years old dynamic Sabih Rehmani with a useful experience in keeping liaison with those who would write for the journal, publicize it commercially and enhance its circulation. It proved a welcome publication in Pakistan and abroad. People liked it and forwarded their suggestions. The elite thinkers,

writers and Na't poets in Pakistan as well as India came in contact with him, appreciated him and wrote for the journal. The journal offered dissertations on Na't critique, research articles, historical, religious and literary issues of Na't, and historical events besides reviews, opinions and impressions of Na't poets, scholars and intellectuals. The issues of the journal also presented articles on intellectual and artistic aspects of Na't in the modern times. Sabih only brought out three issues of "Lailat-un-Na't" under his patronage: first in 1987, second in 1988 and the third in 1994. These publications provided printed facility to the writers zealous of coming out with their views about modern Na't. This encouraged the readers to clear themselves on various aspects of Na't poetry in the perspective of literary criticism and the Na't's rank amongst other genres of Urdu poetry. This triggered a system of creative thinking about panegyrics in modern poetry. That is how the senior writers and scholars of Urdu literature declared "Lailat-un-Na't" a milestone in the promotion of modern Na't literature. The second issue of the journal contained letters to the editors, reviews and comments of the readers on the contents of the first issue. While publishing the third issue, Sabih Rehmani wrote his introductory note as "*ibtadaiya*" commenting on the popularity the journal had gained, its utility and the beauty of its rise as a literary Na't journal:

> "The popularity the journal of Gul Bahar Council has earned in country and abroad has fortified our resolve. Our utmost effort has been that our humble little effort in promoting the remembrance of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is granted, and results in showers of beneficence, blessings, mercy and the Holy Prophet's ﷺ intercession."

There were number of other Na't magazines being regularly published including the monthly Nawa-i-Na't

Karachi, Hamd-o-Na't Karachi, the monthly Na't Lahore, book serial Iwan-e-Na't Lahore, etc. Lailat-un-Na't, however, made a difference, for its main objective was awakening awareness about Na't criticism and research to earn it the status of a literary genre and publishing mere traditional Na't and its virtues. This new character of the publication certainly made a difference and attracted creative minds to generate criticism on Na't as a genre of poetic art.

10.3 The Quarterly Iqan

In 1993, Sabih Rehmani managed to bring out the quarterly "Iqan" as its editor. This too attempted to rouse awareness amongst the readers about new horizons of Urdu Na't poetry. Owing to financial limitations, however, this could not continue.

10.4 Discovering Dr Aziz Aahsan

Writing an introduction to *"Dr Aziz Ahsan and Mutaliat-e-Hamd-o-Na't"*—Dr Aziz Ahsan and Studies of Hamd and Na't under the title Justification (Jawaz), he has himself taken an account of these facts. He writes that he was blessed with the feeling that his penchant for this blissful creativity was an inborn or a juvenile experience with him. Inclination towards Na't was like a prenatal feature with him. Participation in Na't competitions shined his talent and nourished his trend. School days were his Na't days and he joined a proactive Gul-Bahar Na't Council in the same period. That was a fostering environment. He organized its first Lailat-un-Na't Conference as its Patron-in Chief in 1987 and brought out first issue of the journal. "That was the starting point of my journey in Na't journalism," he writes.

In Jawaz, he writes, "You would find numerous Na't anthologies but rare works on Na't in prose. One would perceive that the literature existing about Na't mostly consisted of surveys and narratives of Na't poets. The dearth

of critical and analytical trends and literary scrutiny was striking and noticeable. I found a slight expression of this deficiency with a surprise in Dr Fatehpuri's book "Na't Poetry in Urdu." Jang Karachi June 7 1982 published an article by Aziz Ahsan that was a reflection of my thoughts and feelings. He wrote:

> "This is deplorable that Na't certainly flourished but its critical evaluation was more on decline. The literary critics did not investigate into Na't's critical assessment though work on Na't's historical growth was given zealous attention. The worst is that media's popularity amongst people has undermined this most sacred of the genres. The electronic media has made it evident how uneducated Na't reciters and Qawwals have slighted and belittled its position. Alarming situation is that like other departments of life, Na't is also an area where no troops have entered to launch jihad. I do not want to hurt people but do want to make them realize that Na't is such a sensitive activity that makes caution mandatory."[60]

I took these things to my heart. I was yet under its flap when I came across another article by his pen printed in Govt. City College magazine's Pakistan Number published on 25 December 1983, under the title "Na't poetry in Pakistan". He wrote:

> "The taste for Na't composition may prosper beyond bounds, the deficiency of critics in this field will always exist. We find that books on literary criticism are being produced on every genre of prose, poetry and every subject whatever. No book of criticism, however, is found on the scared genre

[60] Jang Karachi June 7 1982.

like Na't. The people of critical acumen will have to attend to this issue."[61]

After reading these two writings, I felt that the concern for criticism in the field of Na't poetry was making uneasy many other sensitive souls too who had come to the fore and were vocal now. I searched Aziz Ahsan and learnt that he was staying in Islamabad.

My second Na't book came out in 1993. By that time, I had developed contacts with eminent people like Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi, Tabish Dehlvi, Mehshar Badayuni, Shabnam Rumani, Mushfiq Khawja, Prof Sehr Ansari, Hanif As'adi, Aasi Karnali, Muzaffar Warsi, Hafiz Ludhyanwi, Dr Riaz Majeed and Hafeez Taib. I would frequently talk to them and discuss possibilities of promoting Na't literature, the status of Na't poets in Urdu literature and the indifference of the historians of literary history. One of the significant subjects was also my aspiration to promote criticism of Na't literature. In 1994, when my Na't book was included by Ministry of Religious Affairs for Sirat Award, I found an opportunity to attend the Sirat Conference and met all the prominent Na't poets who had been invited to attend the conference. I spoke to all of them and shared my views about eliminating dearth of criticism in Na't literature. The idea received warm welcome but a fear also haunted me which was voiced by Hafeez Taib. He expressed his apprehension about sectarian conflicts on the subject and discouragement of Na't poets as well. He regarded it as a difficult as well as dangerous affair. However, the idea was gaining strength in my mind that I had to bring out a journal that would boost and vitalize the inclination towards criticism in Na't literature. I firmly believed that promotion of Na't was possible only when this genre would undergo literary criticism. A literary

[61] Govt. City College magazine's Pakistan Number published on 25 December 1983.

environment was a must where its scientific and ideological aspects would be evaluated, far from any kind of fears and apprehensions, and purely based on sincere thought and absolutely impartial literary evaluation.

I was lucky to get Aziz Ahsan's contact who shared the good news that he was back to Karachi. He visited my place and we had frequent parleys. I sought his cooperation in Na't Rang project and he heartily agreed to extend full cooperation. About Na't literature, its promotion and launching struggle for literary criticism of Na't, we were on the same page. I felt stronger in taking up the project. He gave me his word to work for the success of this project of which he was sure and confident owing to my previous performance for Lailat-un-Na't."[62]

[62] Sabih Rehmani, *Jawaz, the foreword to Mutaliat-e-Na't.*

11. Establishing Aqleem-e-Na't for the Multiple Grapples

Sabih Rehmani was no more a novice by now, missing sizeable experience though. Doing job, attending college, editing and printing journals, developing literary contacts with intellectuals to acquire articles on modern Na't poetry, responding to editor's mail and running after books and literature for reviews and making the journal revealing and useful, attracting the readers—it was all like a multiple grapple, overpowering the hardships and impossibilities with little experience, meagre educational expertise, scarcity of financial support being all the more challenging to meet the needs. The Qur'anic concept of imparting training revolves around practical striving, coming in grips with adversities, facing grappling situations with confidence and steadfastness and learning by doing to become a hard-task master. Nature exposed Sabih Rehmani to this challenging and demanding situation for a Herculean endeavor lying ahead. Nature fostered the tulip. While he had yet to launch the Na't modernization movement and engage the contemporary mind to identify Na't literary aesthetics and architect modern Na't by introducing into this literature the romantic or revelatory ideal of measuring Na't by modern literary yardsticks of criticism and evaluation and thus invite the secular literary mind to believe that Na't too is a literary genre of Urdu poetry, the transcendental power engaged him in a combat, braving and attritting the hardships to make him learn how to grapple when he brings out his literary journal Na't Rang and

storm the situation with a revolutionary resolve and enthusiasm.

He took the decision and established his institution "Aqleem-e-Na't" in 1995 for the procurement of literary status of Na't through promoting criticism, research and production of books. A Committee was formed to execute the plan; Sabih Rehmani headed the committee. The book serial "Na't Rang" was the mainstay of his struggle that was to be brought out from the "Aqleem-e-Na't" platform. In his editorial to the 21st issue of the journal, he writes:

> "To translate the resolve of evaluating Na't against the laid down rules of literary criticism into a tangible reality, I established the institution of "Aqleem-e-Na't" in 1995 flanked by Aziz Ahsan, Anwar Hussain Siddiqui and Rashid Siddiqui."

12. The Na't Rang Phenomena set in

12.1 Learning the Art of Literary Struggle

He took over Lailat-un-Na't in 1987, when he was 22 years old. By that time he had become a known Na't poet of a classical standard and a popular Na't reciter and melodizer on the electronic media. All the eminent celebrities of poetic art knew him and would admire and encourage him, amazed at the same time by his talent explosion. Chairman Gulbahar Council knew him and was trying to chisel him into a topmost Na't reciter. Seeing his poetic thrust, he handed him the journal, for Sabih was the bomb. He would keep awake, move around, and cultivate relations with those who would prove facilitators in different fields he was required to handle. Allah blessed him with vigilance, readiness, proclivity, a proactive attitude, and a vision to sense, identify and procure the required sources, grasp them and put them to use. Invigorated and vitalized by the unseen might, he would work tirelessly and produce the results that the leading personalities of senior generation would not have expected from him. He himself was unaware that he had to continue these dynamics all along his life.

As I have already described in detail, at this juncture, he came across his great mentor and this angelic support was no one other than Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi. When he was just 24 years, he met this saintly figure who would foster him into a predominantly revolutionary force to re-array the aesthetics and creative values of Na't poetry, upheaval the sluggish mind creating Na't, and jolt him with a force and technique

to architect modern literary Na't from behind the curtain and make the giants of Urdu literature believe that Na't is a great literary genre of Urdu poetry which is unparalleled universally and is superior to lyrical Urdu poetry (Ghazal) in many ways.

12.2 Awareness of the Task

Before he embarked on the mission to raise the citadel of Na't criticism, Sabih Rehmani gathered awareness of the ground realities of Na't literature and the precise requirements he wanted to exact. Writing about Kashif Irfan's *"Na't awr Jadid Tanqeedi Rujhanat"*—Na't and Modern Trends of Criticism, Sabih observed:

> "The critical studies of Na't for long remained outside the mainstream of literary criticism. Other cadres of art and literature had become part and parcel of the conventional criticism and their semantic and structural status was also recognized, while Na't had missed it badly. That, however, was not without reasons which we now thoroughly know. The serious, systematic, critical and analytical study of Na't, which we find currently consistent, did not exist. The protracted negligence of Na't in this way generated several complexities with regard to comprehension and expanse of Na't genre. The Na't poets became negligent of its aesthetic and intellectual values. This negligence resulted in alienation of Na't poetry from the required standards of form, content, diction and style.[63]

The problems further multiplied. Owing to careless creativity of less experienced Na't poets, the senior and

[63] Sabih Rehmani's foreword to Kashif Irfan's *Na't awr Jadid Tanqeedi Rujhanat—Na't and Modern trends of Criticism*.

eminent literary critics booked Na't as unassuming and unliterary product. The knowledgeable souls of Na't criticism also showed indifference to this slighting of the genre and had no take to remove this impression. The issue existed even in recent past but nothing was done to tackle it the way it deserved. Major reason of this insensible behaviour was the critics of the literary world who were oversensitive towards anti-religious posture and would feel annoyed on calling Na't as a literary genre. Majority of them was against introducing Na't poetry at literary level for they assumed it would damage the secular image of Urdu literature. They would call it religious or devotional poetry and keep it off the mainstream, objecting to its formlessness. They also held that Na't was a means of expression of people's personal devotion and therefore did not merit any critical analysis and evaluation. Dr Anwar Sadid's slighting treatment given to this subject in his *"Urdu Adab ki Mukhtasar Tareekh"—Brief History of Urdu Literature* published in 1967 is notable. On page 544 of the book, he has written four pages on "Deeni Shaeri"—*Religious Poetry*, giving one page to Na't where he has observed:

> "The poets would only write a Hamd and a Na't in the beginning of the book for spiritual reward….Those who composed Na't did it swayed by devotion but they were only a few and were poets who did not enjoy a higher status in poetic art."[64]

The argument they brought forth was that the standards fixed for the evaluation of literary genres cannot be determined and employed to evaluate Na't poetry. This objection was also raised by those who would like Na't and

[64] Dr Anwar Sadid, *Urdu ki Mukhtasar Tarikh, Brief History of Urdu Literature,* p. 544, published in 2014 by Aalimi Media Pvt. Ltd., Delhi.

aspire to promote it but were not interested in its literary status and theoretical and aesthetic position; so it did not require any artistic assessment.

This scenario had blocked all paths of literary criticism of Na't poetry. These hurdles had to be eliminated to make Na't grow and prosper as a literary genre at national as well as global levels.

This demanded eradication of bias towards religion that has blurred our social vision for long. Those who had studied Urdu literature in the light of Islam as a kinetic energy and had conceived literature, its creativity, aesthetic values and social standards in this progressive manner turned towards the issue and took a dynamic stance to produce literary criticism with a deep civilizational and religious insight. This religiously progressive mind-set was most beneficial for the genres related to religion at creative level. That is what Na't actually required and Na't Rang pursued to establish.

With this clarity of mind about what to do and how to go about it, Sabih Rehmani was well poised to embark on the Na't voyage in rough waters.

We have seen that nature nurtured him into a hard-task master to develop a net-work of prolific writers who would join him in the revolutionary venture and introduce and promote modern thought on aesthetics, literary evaluation and research into the tradition of Na't as a genre of Urdu poetic art. The experience he earned from Lailat-un-Na't and Iqan and the men of letters he explored carved out of Sabih Rehmani a revolutionary who would generate a creative environment for modern Na't to flourish. The statement of Dr Kashfi and Sabih's own interview telecast on Ahadi's channel are sufficient proofs.

An editor's journal, its basic features, art of editorial writing and utilizing correspondence with readers and writers to its benefit play a key role in displaying his true and sincere editorship. Before writing about Sabih Rehmani's editorials,

discloses Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, the author of *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Mudir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat, —"The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang"* that he had to make frequent telephone calls to Sabih, asking: "How he conceived to publish Na't Rang"? He replied:

> "As a Na't poet, it was nothing new for me. I was well aware of the existing scenario of Na't creativity. I had vividly discerned that the genre of Na't had prevailed upon the literary horizon over last few years. The pure literary journals and magazines had started publishing Na't compositions while the renowned Ghazal poets were also blessed with creating Na't poetry. That was heartening but the tradition of Na't criticism had not yet taken ground, which was badly needed. I had earnestly desired that Na't should also be rich in literary criticism and research. This motive was the main stimulant of bringing out Na't Rang." (Na't Rang editor's telecom on October 5, 2008)[65]

12.3 Devising Expansion Strategy

Having learnt methodology of developing contacts with the contemporary brains while diligently shaping Lailat-un-Na't into a journal of meditative nature, contemplating upon literary character of Na't writings, Sabih Rehmani explored probabilities of shaping a Na't world based on modern criticism techniques, research works, heading towards literary globalization of Na't aesthetics. The dynamism of this creative endeavor predicated upon the following methods earned him unparalleled results.

[65] Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Madir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat, —"The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang"*, p. 33.

1. Editorial technique
2. Letters to the editor
3. Expanding team of literary intellectuals writing on Na't
4. Contacts with seats of learning
5. Promotion of Na't criticism and research work
6. Educating readers, spreading Na't vision and stabilizing writers' team through compiling books on major aspects of Na't poetry comprising scholarly writings by literary intellectuals

Sabih Rehmani would employ all means to spread awareness, conviction about the veracity of his cause, educating even scholars on new dimensions of Na't aesthetics and creative expression of divine poetry, producing disquisitions by masters of criticism and insight engaged in creative venture both in Pakistan and India and bringing into existence a reservoir of research works on Na't literary criticism besides the revival of historical poetic traditions of Na't set by legends of lyrical poetry of Urdu like Ghalib, Ameer Minai, Mohsin Kakorvi and later stalwarts of Na't world like Hali, Iqbal, Ahmed Raza Khan and Zafar Ali Khan. He has also successfully endeavoured to discover and bring into the creative circle fresh talent of youth currently serving the cause of modernism in Na't in the academic cadre and the world of literary education. He is so fortunate; he has achieved all these ideals in about three decades of sincere devotion to the blessed doorsteps of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

13. Employing Editorial Technique and Creative Strategy

Launching the multiple literary grapples in the light of his mentor's advice and guidance, he decided to bring out a book serial journal "Na't Rang" to achieve these laid down objectives. The very first means he employed was writing editorial to develop a communication link with his readers and authors of the disquisitions published in the journal.

Dr Abrar Abdussalam in his research work "*Na'tiya Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis* (Na't Literature: Issues and Premises—an analytical and topical study of letters to the editor Na't Rang)", has thrown light on Sabih's use of editorial to the journal. He writes:

> "He would employ editorials to raise an opportunity to talk about Na't subjects. Instead of giving a ruling, he would raise a question, directing it towards readers. That used to initiate a process of writing articles and letters in support of or disagreement over the question raised. Sabih would then publish these articles and letters received from the readers containing both the viewpoints. In this way, the discussion would advance and expand. He, however, acted as a catalyst in the process which does not practically take part in the activity but its presence expedites the actions and reactions. Na't Rang, in like manner, reinforced the deliberations on Na't to make headway and progress. Sabih has never sided with any standpoint to make it heavier, for such a partial stance would spoil the dialogue

> and mar its creative, ideological, aesthetic and artistic progression, resulting in one-sided affair and the secession of the process."[66]

Editorial to the first issue

In his editorial to the first issue of the journal, Sabih Rehmani emphasized:

> "In this significant time of an expansive trend towards Na't creativity, this is a serious and formal step towards protecting Na't from Na't poet's below par casual practices."

He wanted to serve them a solid base to undergo a true literary scrutiny to establish Na't as pure literature. He decided that the celebrities of Urdu literature who had knowledge about Na't identification should write disquisitions on this subject. Though young in age, he was bold and brave and would speak to senior men of letters in Pakistan and India and convince them to write dissertations on the subject. For the very first issue of Na't Rang, those who contributed their articles included people like Saeed Badar, Syed Al-e-Ahmed Rizvi, Dr Aftab Naqvi Shaheed, Jazib Qureshi, Raja Rasheed Mahmood, Ghaus Mian, Dr Ishaq Qureshi, Dr Aasi Karnali, Adeeb Raipuri, Rasheed Warsi, Aziz Ahmed, Dr Syed Rafi-ud-Din Ashfaq, Dr Aslam Farrukhi, Hafeez Taib and Dr Tahsin Firaqi.

It was for the first time an Urdu literary journal appeared with articles on the Na't's creative experience, criticism and insight of poetic art and research by high ranking literary authors from Pakistan and India. Both theoretical as well as practical criticism was attempted to elucidate to the readers what he actually wanted to do. Through Na't Rang, the

[66] Dr Abrar Abdussalam in his research work *(Na'ti'a Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis—Na't Literature: Issues and Premises*).

readers first time learnt about types and aspects of literary criticism such as:

- Analytical criticism
- Aesthetical criticism
- Descriptive criticism
- Historical criticism
- Stylistic Analysis
- Practical criticism
- Theoretical criticism
- Sociological criticism
- Reformatory criticism
- Ethical criticism
- Judicial/legislative criticism
- Impressionistic criticism
- Comparative criticism
- Romantic criticism
- Classical criticism
- Structural criticism
- Semantic/lexical/linguistic Analysis

Aasi Karnali penned his views about prohibitions in Na't compositions, a subject which was probably attempted first time. Rasheed Warsi selected vigilance in the creative experience of Na't, and Aziz Ahsan dwelt upon irregularities and negligence in the use of language while producing Na't. The material was adorned in separate corners like Na't Research, Critical appreciation of Na't, ideology and art of Na't poetry. All that comprehensively reflects the editor's aim and resolve to make it a classic exercise in Na't literature.

He made the first issue of Na't Rang so relevant, useful and informative as to attract the whole world of poetic art what the genre of Na't actually is. In the same issue, he wrote in another brief write-up:

> "In Urdu Na't literature, appreciation of Na't has never been deficient any way. However, the tradition of expressing cautious and vigilant

> practices has only remained vague and imprecise. From this viewpoint, the articles mentioned are part of a sincere effort to restore this tradition… Appreciation, interpretation, and understanding poetry are purely based on taste and liking we call proclivity. The angles of liking a piece of poetic art, therefore, may be diverse but adherence to the set standards of poetic principles is inevitable. Language i.e. diction too has a discipline to follow. In this regard, we welcome both supporting as well as differing opinions, which we shall wait for anxiously."[67]

This piece of writing formed under the pen of a 30 year old youth with only scanty formal erudition about literary criticism of Na't. Nonetheless, he has written so precise, brief and comprehensive that it becomes conspicuous that he very well knows what he is up to and how to achieve the goal. The tool he finds most useful in achieving his objective is writing a matter-of-fact editorial, bringing the idea home to his readers. The language he writes captures the readers' interest in getting forward. The editorial to the first issue caresses the readers' imagination with colours:

> "This book serial has enshrined a rainbow of multiple colours of panegyric subjects and themes. These colours have been squeezed in the sunlight of research and criticism, picked out of the Na't landscape of the contemporary era. These colours also include the dyes and shades of the Na't poets' blossoms of devotional compositions. I firmly believe that these colours will spread before your eyes such a spiritual flower bed as will spray light into your hearts and entrance your minds. I owe my sincere gratitude to all my writers and ad promotors

[67] Na't Rang 1.

> who have added colours of devotion and dedication to Na't Rang and look forward to your opinions with a throbbing heart."[68]

This is the language of love, sincerity and firm resolve to serve the readers with something fresh, novel, soothing and spiritually charismatic. The words like 'rainbow of multiple colours of Na't subjects, sunlight of research and criticism, landscape of the contemporary era, blossoms of devotional compositions and spiritual flower bed paint a picturesque view of the editor's aspirations, his mature thought and skill and art of communication, well versed in employing poetic expertise in writing a stimulating prose. Besides, he has not missed anything in enhancing the aesthetic value of the journal, even adding calligraphic styles of Drood pak and other pieces of the art. He really brought up a beautiful edifice of Na't research and criticism, attracting the contemporary creative mind.

Declaring Na't Rang a movement

The response was so encouraging that Sabih Rehmani, just 8 months after the first issue, declared Na't Rang a movement in his editorial to the 2nd issue in December, 1995. He writes:

> "This is both sad and surprising that even today Na't is being talked about as mere a second rate literary genre while, in fact, the contemporary Na't literature is as vital and dynamic as other genres of literature. The modern Na't poet is thoroughly aware of contemporary literary mind, engaged in mulling over cosmic issues with agony and anguish. Furthermore, he is presenting to the restless and anxiety-stricken world the Prophetic Seerah as the

[68] Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Madir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat, —"The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang"*, p. 15.

> panacea of its maladies and tribulations and which will show to the humanity the path to peace, tranquillity, success and survival. Confronted with global crises and impressed by Islam and its Messenger's trueness, the humankind is seeking refuge in the embrace of the Prophet of Islam. Under these circumstances and in the literary perspective, the study of Na't literature will do justice not only to this genre of literature but with the entire literary world as well. It requires our critics to scrutinize and evaluate the assets of panegyrics with the touchstone of criticism and survey its semantic and artistic aspects. Besides, keeping in view the innovative trend and experiments in forms, they also need to fix their true literary significance. Our literary writers and readers should feel this responsibility and join this movement to advance this important tradition of literature."

In his book *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Mudir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat, —"The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang"*, Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar observes:

> "I am a witness to it that when Sabih Rehmani talks to an educated person, he persuades him to write on some subject. Gradually, the request becomes a demand and a reminder (using love and anger both as his instruments), until he succeeds in getting the desired result. The late Hafeez Taib would call his technique 'the editor's shrewdness'; the methods do not fatigue him though."[69]

[69] Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Madir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat, —"The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang"*, p. 39.

Exactly nine months later, the third issue of Na't Rang saw the daylight. Mentioning scanty ads with reference to financial outlay, he explains the delay but gives the glad tidings that the 'Na't Rang' lovers have grown in number while the eminent writers of the required articles too have turned the journal into an assembly of intellectuals joining it from far and wide. He does not forget to highlight its individuality among scores of Na't magazines. He writes:

> "Na't Rang is a pioneer in many ways, especially in adding depth, seriousness and attraction to various subjects pertaining to Na't's aesthetics, artistic aspects and critical evaluation methods. There are two aspects: literary and aesthetic aspect and the aspect of subjects connected to Islamic beliefs. The Na't Rang critics have covered both the aspects."[70]

By 2004, Sabih Rehmani had published 20 issues of Na't Rang in only nine years. In this short span of time, the Na't Rang revolution had transpired. Sabih had earned great victory in gathering a large and effective team of literary intellectual and writers who would prove the case of Na't as a literary genre providing evidence in aesthetics, artistic evaluation, critical analyses, theoretical, practical, descriptive and structural criticism and producing useful articles and theses in hundreds on variety of subjects concerning diverse aspects of Na't poetry.

The Ghalib corner

He added another attribute to Na't Rang through specifying corners to the renowned Urdu poets and endeavoured to revive the tradition of Na't and its poetic aesthetics. That is the renaissance character of Na't Rang.

[70] Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, *Fann-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Madir Na't Rang ki Adarti Khidmat, —"The Art of Editorial Writing and editing services of the Editor Na't Rang"*, p. 41.

Through the Ghalib corner, he brought out a subtle quality of Ghalib's poetry: Ghalib's Na't writing. Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi worked on the disquisition and for the first time astonished the readers with a Na't image concealed in Ghalib's lyrical poetry.

In May 2003, in his editorial to the 15th issue, Sabih Rehmani declares with a bang:

> "Our aspirations, with which we stepped out in April, 1995 have been largely fulfilled and the unconcern and stasis of criticism has almost come to an end. A system has formed of impartial reviews and discussions on subjects of Na't criticism which has made the erudite people attend to the literary aspects of Na't besides seriously making up their mind to write on the subject. The gradual increase in number of eminent writers and a widening variety of subjects bear testimony to this claim. We bow before the Almighty Lord in gratitude. We have accomplished this journey sheltered by poetics and Islamic law."

13.1 Towards Global Na't Foundation

Completing a decade of revolutionary struggle for Na't research and criticism, he wrote in his editorial to 19th issue:

> "Persistent soul searching is imperative for a Na't poet to explore his inner secret and test his literary prowess in the field. That entails a comparative study of the creations of poetic art at universal level, in the light of universal standards and creative values. In view of the current wave of globalization, it is inevitable to introduce, broaden and expand in all the real directions the all-inclusiveness, comprehensiveness and universality of the Prophethood and the Messengership of Muhammad

ﷺ the beloved Messenger of Allah. That is our religious as well as literary duty."

Dwelling upon this theme, he further writes:

"We have yet to introduce Na't literature in the perspective of all its aspects as per the highest laid down standards. In view of the current religious extremism, it is mandatory to familiarize the true variety of the Messenger's personage with regard to the Muslims' devotion, love, affinity and allegiance in all the literary genres of literature like epic and ode. To attain to this goal, we need a universal institution that should have its own identity and framework."

Expanding upon the theme he firmly states:

"Through Na't Rang, we are presenting to our overseas readers living in all the continents of the world to put forth their valuable opinions towards establishing a "Global Na't Foundation" that will achieve the laid down goals explained in the preceding pages."

13.2 Delayed Publication of the Journal

The Na't Rang had by now become a routine matter and a part of life for the readers. The editor would always explain to them the delays which strengthened their relation. Printing journals and magazines without any financial support or cover is never less than a miracle. Here, Sabih Rehmani always appreciates Fazli Sons for their generous cooperation in accepting delayed payments and that also in easy instalments. He would share with the readers the issues of bread and butter for life is too expensive to live while legitimate earnings are scanty.

Sabih's love, however, infuses into his heart the vitality to brave the dangers and continue his revolutionary struggle,

while his readers would felicitate him for his resolve and steadfast adherence to the cause. The education he imparted to them on various aspects of criticism was true enlightenment that illumined their souls. His editorials were such documents. He wrote in the 20th issue:

> "My stance is that Na't can only be studied through selective criticism which implies study according to the rules of all the schools of thought. The historical school of criticism signifies under what circumstances and eras people turn towards criticism. The psychological criticism unveils the secrets about Na't's share in the poets' spiritual, mental and psychic enhancement and broadening of mind. How has Na't purged the poets of guilt and sins and how has it played its role in purifying the society? How it is that classic Na't cannot be created without exalted values of life and it is values that set the direction of human society! Studying Islam is binding for studying Na't so as to conceive the station of Messengership. Na't does not remain confined to a few rituals alone because the Prophetic Sira in prose and poetry architects human personality, adding to it moral beauty, social nobility and spiritual aesthetics."

13.3 Getting his Bearings and Establishing Na't Research Center

A year later, he got his bearings to find out where he had reached and in what direction he would tread to reach the destination. In his editorial to the 21st issue of Na't Rang, he recollects what he did in 1995:

> "Na't was neglected in getting its literary status amongst other literary genres for the sole reason that no literary criticism was proposed or practised to carve it into real art. I terribly felt this deficiency

> of analytical insight and resultant critical evaluation of Na't in 1994 on the eve of annual Sira Conference organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (This episode has been narrated in the preceding pages in a different context). There I spoke my heart to all the distinguished poets who were there to attend the conference. They included Hafeez Taib, Dr Aasi Karnali, Hafiz Ludhyanwi, Muzaffar Warsi, Dr Aftab Ahmed Naqwi, Bashir Hussain Nazim and Syed Al Ahmed Rizvi. Then in 1995, I instituted Aqleem-e-Na't to bring out Na't Rang book serial. Aziz Ahsan, Rasheed Siddiqui and Anwer Hussain Siddiqui volunteered to stand with me. Its first issue was "Tanqeed (criticism) Number". Never in Urdu literature were presented such all-inclusive critical write-ups as Na't Rang first issue published. Its dawn spread light in the world of Urdu poetry, which was unprecedented. It illumined the paths of applying literary yardsticks in Urdu poetry. Total 21 issues have come out so far and the caravan that set out to promote Na't literature as pure literary genre has by now encompassed the entire Urdu world."[71]

Aqleem-e-Na't had also to print reference books to develop a reservoir for research work by researchers in various universities. It took up this project and by 2002, it produced a handsome number of books that would prove helpful in research and critical assignments. Sabih Rehmani writes:

> "In 2002, the Aqleem-e-Na't was renamed as Na't Research Center to publish Na't Rang and literary books to promote criticism and research. One of its major objectives was to extend Na't identification

[71] Na't Rang, 21.

> and comprehension and its flow towards higher academic institutions and universities. Thank God, He has showered sufficient triumphs upon us. Apart from research works at individual levels, theses have also been produced in various universities at Master, M Phil and PhD levels while several dissertations are in progress. This productive activity is not confined only to Pakistan. The universities in India too are engaged in this jihad. The students genuinely needed to be reinforced with relevant and readily available study material. The disquisitions cannot be accomplished without the required books and documents. This is sad that Na't literature suffers from a drought of books on criticism, history and aesthetics. The few existing ones are not available or easily accessible or would meet the requirements of scholars as they need. Na't Research Center has therefore, galloped to reach out to the sources and raise the library facilities in this regard. Work on indexes too has been taken in hand to maintain the speed threatened in the absence of these books."

Sabih Rehmani then produced a list of books that the Center was able to publish so far. Branches of Na't Research Centers have also been established in India and England (Leeds). Famous Na't poetess Samiya Naz in Leeds and Zubair Qadri in Nasak (India) are looking after these facilities. The Na't Research Center India has also started bringing out Na't Rang there as well. The Indian literary circles have appreciated the 20th issue of the journal published there. In view of the increasing popularity of internet, four websites have also been launched:

1. www.sabihrehmani.com
2. www.Na'tresearchcenter.com
3. www.Na'trang.net

4. www.visaaleyaar.com

And now a portion from the editorial to the current 30th issue which reads:

> "Viewing in the perspective of Urdu Na't criticism, if we compare it with criticism work wrought on any other significant genre such as Ghazal, Nazm, Short story or Novel, the superiority of Na't has to be confessed because, in last 6 or 7 decades, the number of subjects and topics raised and the manner in which they have been developed and researched with regard to the genre of Na't can only be rarely seen for other genres. This may not be easily accepted or swallowed, but to facilitate them understanding and recognizing the ground reality, this indication will prove worthwhile that if they take it easy they should find the critical and analytical studies conducted in the first 60 years of any noteworthy genre, its methodology or paradigm and the quality and quantity of output and the milestones of its criticism. They should then compare the data with that of Na't criticism along the x axis and the y axis and find our ratio of progress or output against time in the given fields of criticism and research."[72]

Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, while analysing his editorial work by international standards, has also discussed its style and salient features. His true and sincere passion, penchant, aspiration to advance and capture and working beyond time are the most conspicuous features his writings reflect. An editor may dwell upon the issues on the table but Sabih Rehmani is concise, reticent, relevant and to the point. He is brief and comprehensive. He is a young and modern poet and

[72] Na't Rang, 30.

his poetic style glimpses in his prose. Subtle and precise, his writings are permeated with sincerity, love and accommodative stance. He will never entangle himself in sectarian conflicts and has the guts to convince people of an adverse attitude to his side. The Ahmed Raza Khan Number of Na't Rang also included articles written by those who had jurisprudential difference with him. Sabih Rehmani declines conflicts and observes cautions while writing and that is his style and the key to success as well.

His language is clear, unambiguous and precise and breathes of Prophetic love. He writes sweet text that touches the hearts not heads alone. Some of his sentences seem proverbial and quotable. One can safely describe his editorials as attractive, standard and a great success which attracted people in thousands, won them on his side and achieved the targets that seemed unfeasible and unattainable.

14. Correspondence / Letter-Writing

Sabih kept writing his editorials with his brilliant vision, addressing all the issues that would raise their heads for the writers and readers, sorting them out with the democratic spirit, accommodating even adverse views and leading the journey of creative, aesthetic, critical, analytical, diagnostic and searching progression of Na't to universal literary standards, earning for this genre a global literary status. His editorials won him success in educating the writers and scholars as well as readers on the import of Na't criticism and its literary aesthetics and taking his struggle to victory.

The beauty of this Na't revolutionary is that he was clear in his mind what his target was and what stratagem he required to bull it. He was aware what dividends correspondence with readers and writers would pay him in achieving his goal. The subject matters of letters to the editor vary widely. The questions taken up in the editorial and the issues discussed in the articles by the writers usually form the moot case. They either support or oppose a stance taken by the publication in its editorials, or respond to another writer's letter to the editor. They may also remark on materials that have appeared in some previous issue of the journal. Such letters are either critical or praising. That is how letters generate healthy debates or discussions which a journal takes up as per its policy to create the requisite intellectual and ideological environment. Sabih Rehmani mastered it and educed the required response about Na't and its criticism as a literary genre.

A remarkable attempt has already been made in this regard by Dr Abrar Abdussalam in the form of *Na'tiya Adab:*

Masail-o-Mubahis—Na't Literature: Issues and Premises—an analytical and topical study of letters to the editor Na't Rang, Sabih Rehmani. Here we discuss and analyze this fruitful effort that made things easy.

14.1 Letters to the Editor

Before Na't Rang book serial was launched, only a few magazines and periodicals were doing their bit to promote Na't poetry. Their efforts were only confined to the creation of conventional Na't with a virtuous sentiment and not for its literary aesthetics. Some of these publications would also contribute to disquisitions on criticism. However it was Na't Rang alone that launched a movement to make concerted efforts towards Na't criticism, research work and establishing the status of Na't poetry as a literary genre once and for all. Its great success was collecting a congregation of eminent writers who had developed an inclination towards Na't literature and had already entered the field. This literary Na't circle did not take shape in days or weeks; its genetics took years of strenuous and dedicated struggle to form. Sabih Rehmani would burn his midnight oil to set alight the literary path of Na't to tread. With his dedicated hard work, rather *jihad*, an environment arose where thinking, contemplating and writing about Na't without any inhibitions no more remained an unliterary and uncreative activity; as if it was a necessity now. Discharging his literary duty, the editor Na't Rang invited the creative intellectuals to write on creative, evaluative and research aspects of Na't.

Verbatim printing of letters to editor

This was not mere verbalism. To make it a tangible reality, printing of the readers' messages in Na't Rang was started as a permanent feature of the journal. This opened up dialogue on literary, intellectual and linguistic aspects of Na't. The editor not only provided an opening, he also displayed a

generous stance and verbatim printed the readers' views about the scholars' dissertations printed in Na't Rang expressed in their letters to the editor. Dr Abrar Abdussalam has produced a tremendous research work in the form of *Na'tiya Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis—Na't Literature: Issues and Premises*—an analytical and topical study of letters to the editor Na't Rang, Sabih Rehmani. It has enlightened the readers of Na't Rang how Sabih employed this correspondence skill and what benefits he obtained out of it in terms of promotion of Na't, awakening Na't awareness, disseminating methods of criticism and research in the field of Na't poetry and ultimately winning Na't its due status of literary genre.

Impartiality and Logic

Sabih would invite the scholars and intellectuals to brighten the Na't productivity with the enlightenment bestowed upon them through their insight acquired from Islamic law (Sharia). He made them play their role in fixing the real and true status of Na't. In this regard, the editor Na't Rang implored the scholars to point out intellectual and artistic shortcomings of Na't but with cogent arguments premised on logic and not on false analogies or wrangles. The critic paves the way for creative experience and keeps the writer from going astray. While writing criticism, he leads both the creator and the creation with an open mind and heart.[73]

Initiation of moderate, tolerant and unbiased free dialogue

The upshot of the arduous work toiled by Na't Rang was a platform for the national and international readers to freely

[73] Dr Abrar Abdussalam, *Na'tia Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis Na't Literature: Issues and Premises*, p. 16.

put forth their ideas and concepts. That reared an ambiance of forbearance, progressive thinking and liberal-minded communication, which facilitated people from divergent creeds and schools of thought with an opportunity of healthy, constructive and purposeful dialogue. Through letters to the editor Na't Rang, everyone would boldly reach out to the readers with his ideas and point of view. Such a freedom of expression through letters, abridged psychic distances and purified hearts of scorn and spite. In the process, they discovered the possibility to resolve mutual differences and eliminate disputes and hostilities. This was a way to convince and get convinced and promote reciprocity, understanding and intellectual harmony amongst diverse idiosyncrasies. This character of letters to the editor Na't Rang provided the letter-writers with self-purification through freedom of expression, besides igniting serious thought to promote Na't literature by way of clarity about beliefs, Na't poetics and enhancing creativity in the fields of Na't criticism and research work.

The galaxy of letters' variety

Various kinds of letters were published in Na't Rang. Some are mere acknowledgements, while others are of introductory nature sometimes venting complaints. There are still others that remove kinks, tensions and anxieties. However, overwhelming majority of these letters relate to knowledge and information, literary queries, religious issues and subjects of research and criticism. It is these letters that are Na't Rang's net earnings. We find in them scattered rudiments of research, criticism, literary knowledge and research acumen. Some of them are the real currency of literary craft. These barebones have formed part of a letter pertaining to some aspect of a subject or have been written to

correct, reject or expand the theme of a disquisition published in Na't Rang.[74]

These letters to the editor have been specifically written on Na't criticism, Na't research, creative experience of Na't and other Na't related subjects. There is a free flow of concepts and ideas sprouting from the fountainheads of letter writers streaming the Na't Rang soil. The riches of research treasured in Na't Rang are spread out amongst a sizeable body of readers. Besides, fascinating descriptions, narrations and expressions are seen feeding the aesthetic taste of the readers. The reservoir of Na't research and criticism has decked the printed pages of Na't Rang with unique literary fragrance and scholastic colors.

These letters serve us theoretical deliberations and dialogues as well as some rare specimens of practical criticism. They comprise personal observations, expression of intuitional experiences and discussions on scientific and academic aspects of Na't in addition to research related errors. One can look for life sketches of Na't poets, their remnants, and opinions about their creative practices. They include biographical notes and cynical views too. In sum, the galaxy of letters' variety of subjects has enshrined a cosmos of Na't's infinite aspects. The critical and research utility of these letters is undeniable. Presenting a panorama of life, they also display affluent resources of knowledge, literature, history, civilization, literary research and criticism.

Assembly of heterogeneous group of people

The Na't Rang letter writers do not belong to any specific region or area, nor do they belong to a particular sect, creed, race or tribe. Writers, scholars and intellectuals from all schools of thought, religions, sects, creeds, language, color,

[74] Dr Abrar Abdussalam, *Na'ti'a Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis Na't Literature: Issues and Premises*, p. 40.

race, tribe, regions and continents are extended warm welcome to freely express their views. The editor Na't Rang states:

> "Ever since the commencement of Na't Rang to date, I have not restricted it only to present a journal's particular standpoint, its established rules and principles. I have rather tried to make it an assembly of heterogeneous group of people possessing diverse views and participate with their respective creeds to explicate the artistic, literary, religious and ideological aspects of the beloved Messenger's Deen and practices. This invitation is not confined to the intellectuals and scholars alone. A reader of common taste and awareness of literature can also express his views with the same freedom as the intellectuals are given the right to do. Difference of opinion is not bad; nice proprieties are essential."[75]

Na't Rang is not a product of rigid mind. Intellectuals of every color, race, language, region, sect and creed have taken part in making it grow on. A living and energetic blood is flowing in its arteries. Had it been a representative of a particular sect, it would have ceased and disappeared long ago like other publications of the ilk. Since it is broad-based, representing divergent ideas, concepts and schools of thought, it is advancing towards its destination unabated. The editor did not confine it to the creation of Na't poetry alone; he made it a book serial or criticism and research work, in a way, declaring that it was now critics and researchers who would direct and lead the creative experience of Na't.

[75] Dr Abrar Abdussalam, *Na'ti'a Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis (Na't Literature: Issues and Premises*), p. 24.

The Growing themes of letters

The renowned critics and research scholars from all over the world were pursued to write dissertations on different aspects of Na't. At the same time, opinions and reviews were also sought for on these theses from creative writers through letters on these subjects. The letters to the editors were printed verbatim, and the readers would be requested not to make it an experience in consolation but to criticize things in a scientific manner. This gradually changed the tone and texture of correspondence and gradually morphed the initially encouraging and appreciating letters into pieces of pure literature, Na't criticism and research activity. The letters that are published in Na't Rang now discuss modern views and practices on criticism and research methodologies instead of old theories and concepts. The modern Urdu criticism has also found ways into Urdu Na't world and both are regarded pure literature. This was not an easy task. The Na't Rang received the blessings of passion, diligence and verve that were required to translate its dream into reality.[76]

14.2 Salient Points of Letters Published in the 2ND Issue

The Director Na't Research Center, Dr Aziz Ahsan has taken a brief account of the letters to the editor published in the 2nd issue of Na't Rang. In his massive research work on the criticism of Urdu Na't literature, he has given a summary of the points raised by the celebrities of literature in their letters to the editor. A view of these points will unveil the subjects and quality of these letters and their significance.

1. **Dr Farman Fatehpuri**: Giving a ruling on the merits and demerits of an essay written on Na't is not appropriate.

[76] Dr Abrar Abdussalam, *Na'ti'a Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis (Na't Literature: Issues and Subjects*), p. 44.

Discussing them or the practice in vogue on Na't and its deliberations are just alien to me. In my view, the ideas and words that attain affinity to the holy Prophet (ﷺ) are far beyond the criticism in vogue. I can only say that I like the articles by Aziz Ahsan and Rasheed Warsi.

2. **Dr, Syed Abu al-Khair Kashfi**: In Na't Rang, there is a balance between research and criticism.

3. **Shah Misbah-ud-Din Shakeel**: The dissertations on Na't are significant, for they have highlighted that most poets do not observe caution and care in moments of high devotion.

4. **Shabnam Romani**: Na't Rang has put together conversation on the context of Na't, pointing out Na't journey, articles on Na't criticism and accountability of Na't poets on their incautions.

5. **Mushfiq Khawaja**: You have produced in this issue articles on research and criticism covering historical, ideological, aesthetic and artistic aspects of Na't poetry.

6. **Hafeez Taib**: A need for cautious approach towards Na't composition has always been felt. This has become more alarming because earlier people only blessed with religious education and natural inclination would compose Na't. However, these days, every poet seeks the blessing of writing Na't and themes and subjects of Na't too are widening. That has warranted special care to fulfil the requirements of composing Na't.

7. **Riaz Hussain Ch.**: While Na't is a literary genre, its artistic aspects must be subjected to criticism. If we only make it a means to earn spiritual reward, it will become static as a literary genre. Your attempt is bold and courageous. I extend my felicitations to you.

8. **Dr Jamil Jaliby**: The responsibility you have taken to reform the vision of Na't poets is indeed heartening and admirable.

9. **Dr Abd-un-Naeem Azizi, Bareli, India**: This is imperative to advise the Na't poets to eschew unlawful things

about the holy Prophet ﷺ and observe caution about literary and artistic soundness, poetic diction, and historical and religious references.

10. **Dr Tahsin Firaqi**: Hafiz Afzal Faqir and Rashid Warsi have written articles worth reading on what cares and concerns should be kept in view while composing Na't.

11. **Naqwi Ahmedpuri, Ahmedpur Sharqia**: The critics have not touched Na't out of honor and veneration. I believe that Na't should not be subjected to ideological criticism because of the sectarian divide among the poets. Every poet composes Na't according to his sectarian creed. The objective of all of them, however, is submitting devotion to the beloved Prophet ﷺ. Nonetheless, if the poetic verses have artistic issues, they should be pointed out; if a poet uses some words that amount to infamy, he should be asked for correction.

12. **Tabish Dehlvi**: Amazing that critics have not regarded Na't worth attention as they have considered other genres. Probably they have taken it a single-direction activity with reference to the Prophet's reverence and praise. Their work on Na't is just paltry and insignificant. The anthologies published and a book on its history is unsatisfactory. Your work, however, is solid; your consistent effort to include Na't in superior literary genres is commendable.

13. **Pirzada Iqbal Ahmed Farooqi, Lahore**: I wish to admire Rasheed Warsi's subtle criticism in his article "Allah's glory lacking in Urdu Na't". He has explicated delicate points in an enlightening manner. He criticizes literary people in a logical and philosophical way and one wants to contribute to the logic. If followed, those who make use of language carelessly would think hundred times before doing it.

14. **Ameen Rahat Chughtai, Rawalpindi**: This is a unique and bold experience to subject Na't to criticism.

15. **Dr Anwar Minai, Kolar, India**: The disquisition by Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi "Na't and the magic of semantic complexity" is the vital force of the Na't Rang issue. It bears

testimony to his boundless knowledge and profound insight. He has elucidated the creative purpose and significance of 'word' with evidence and discussed the structural, semantic, aesthetic and impressionistic levels of poetry.[77]

[77] Dr Aziz Ahsan, Research on Criticism of Urdu Na't literature, p. 421.

15. Sabih's Compilations and Anthologies

15.1 History of Na't will ever remember Sabih Rehmani: Dr Moeen Uddin Aqeel

Titled "Impressions", Dr Moeen Uddin Aqeel writes in his foreword to Dr Tahira In'am's dissertation *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel* "Compilations of Sabih Rehmani: Forming up of New Na't Criticism" that it attracts him because it relates to Na't and secondly, for it elaborates impressions of Sabih Rehmani's endeavors, a name complementary to Na't genre connected to Na't Rang, an epic-making journal. It has, besides rendering unprecedented services to popularize Na't with its charismas of form and content, has performed an exemplary and singular accomplishment mutualizing creative moves of the writers of common taste, rising to an unparalleled status. History of Na't will ever remember Sabih Rehmani for this unique venture.

No less significant are his efforts producing books and anthologies, apart from Na't Rang, which he is heaping up towards the promotion of Na't through his Research Center. His compilations have acquainted us with the Na't poets many of whom might be new for most of us in addition to their analytical studies and contemporary advances in the Na't world. These anthologies have effectively reflected Sabih Rehmani's distinctive attributes.

New Na't Criticism

Under the auspices of Aqleem-e-Na't and, later, Na't Research Center, Sabih Rehmani collated several treatises by

topmost literary writers on a wide variety of subjects and produced a readily available text corpora for researchers and critics to unceasingly accomplish their assignments. Dr Tahseen Bibi has widely covered such anthologies in her recent research work: "Sabih Rehmani: the Person and Reflection". She has especially mentioned and taken an analytical view of:

- *Urdu Na't ki She'ari Riwayat* (Poetic Tradition of Urdu Na't)
- *Pakistani Zabanon me Na't: Riwayat awr Irtiqa*—Evolution of Na't and its Tradition in Pakistani Languages
- *Urdu Na't me Tajalliyat-e-Seerat*—Seerat Beams in Urdu Na't
- *Ghalib awr Sanai Khawja*—Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet
- *Kalam-e- Mohsin Kakorvi*—Poetic Works of Mohsin
- *Kalam-e- Raza: Fikri wo Fanni Zawiay*—Poetic Works of Raza—Ideological and Artistic Aspects
- *Iqbal ki Na't: Fikri wa Usloobiati Mutalia*—Iqbal's Na't, Studies in Thought and Style
- *Na't Nagar ka Basi* (The Resident of Na't Abode); Na't Poetry and Na't Identification by Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi
- *Dr Aziz Ahsan and Mutalia-e-Hamd-o-Na't*—Dr Aziz Ahsan, Studies of Hamd and Na't
- *Urdu Hamd ki Shaeri Riwayat*—Poetic Tradition of Hamd in Urdu Poetry

Besides, there are a number of poetic anthologies as well which serve the readers with a historical, developmental and aesthetic view of Na't poetry of different eras.[78]

[78] Dr Tahseen Bibi, *Sabih Rehmani, Shakhs-o-Aks, (Sabih Rehmani: Person and Reflection)*.

Dr Tahira In'am has brought out a useful study of Sabih's compilations and anthologies calling it "Forming up of new Na't Criticism." She describes these compilations as an emerging Na't sight with striking features. She observes:

> "Producing compilations is not an ordinary undertaking. It is providing the researches with a balanced and collated corpus comprising disquisitions of diverse minds pursuing diverse objectives. He has coordinated his inner faculties with Na't literature so overwhelmingly that nothing occurs to him except Na't. This fulltime manifold venture has morphed Na't Rang into an elderly figure of a kingpin, guardian and protector with glad tidings of triumphs. That is what we make out of his compilations: his mind, his sentiment and his objective."[79]

Dr Tahira further writes:

> "Like his editorials, the glimpse of his evaluative style and criticism reflected in his prefaces to his compilations sprout from his heart despite the objectivity he has to apparently observe. That emanates from his avid fondness for the subjects or the authors who write the dissertations on Na't. He does not let criticism go void of this element as the standard Na't cannot be empty of truth and devotion. Probably he is not conscious of the fact that he is performing a job of founding new criticism apparently calling himself a reader and a student in his impressive dialogues."

[79] Dr Tahira In'am, *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, Naqd-e-Na't ki Tshkil (Sabih Rehmani's Compilations: Forming up of new Na't Criticism).*

15.2 Sabih Rehmani: A Na't Revolutionary: Dr Riaz Majeed

In the same book, Dr Riaz Majeed has expressed his valuable views about Sabih's compilations and appreciated Dr Tahira's precisely wrought analysis of his anthologies. Writing about his compilations' literary advantages towards advancing Na't criticism and facilitating research work Dr Riaz Majeed has commented:

> "These compilations have manufactured a panoramic spectacle and provided to research scholars and critics an expansion of Na't literature which is thought provoking and result oriented. Sabih's collations brought about an environment of research and criticism for Na't literature. He provided an opening for understanding Na't created by Mohsin, Kakorvi, Ahmed Raza Barelvi, Mirza Ghalib and Iqbal in contemporary perspective which was otherwise far from possible and stimulated creative effort in Na't world. We learnt what jewels the hundred year old sublime Na't literature contains which the dust of time has failed to debase and defile and which even today warms our hearts….Similarly he focused on the diverse prose and poetry and commitments of Abu al-Khair Kashfi and Aziz Ahsan and unfolded the effulgent essence of their subtle expressions. Na't being pivotal in Sabih's thought system, his compilations have played a revolutionary role in spreading and expanding Na't criticism and research work."[80]

[80] Dr Tahira In'am, *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, Naqd-e-Na't ki Tshkil (Sabih Rehmani's Compilations: Forming up of new Na't Criticism)*, p. 31.

Sabih Rehmani has explored new horizons of the art of Na't creation and has brightened them with the effulgence of Prophetic love. Whether prose or poetry, he has concentrated on Na't alone. Entranced in ardent love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ he would never become extravagant. While taking up dissertations for his compilations, he did not hold back from the subjects of Na't criticism, nor felt unenthusiastic. To collect the scattered jewels of Prophetic love, he has always felt zealous. This state of mind made him compile anthologies. That has helped him a great deal in creating the Na't world he is always laboring to raise.

Here is a brief review on each of his compilations; they are, besides my own literary understanding, mostly contingent upon Sabih's own prefaces to the anthologies and Dr Tahira In'am's masterly written analyses of the collations.

15.3 Sabih's Perception and Creative Dynamics

I. Urdu Na't ki Shaeri Riwayat—"Poetic Tradition of Urdu Na't"

Mubeen Mirza, an old friend of Sabih Rehmani, eminent writer and a vigilant intellectual of contemporary literature, asked Sabih: "At what stage is the Na't literary tradition today and what of its subjects have the critics focused?" "It was a simple question but it left me answerless," says Sabih.

The Na't literary tradition has indeed made some progress, late though; and the literary journals and periodicals too have played a role, yet there does not exist any comprehensive critical, intellectual and scientific documents that may prove an evidence for a satisfactory answer to such inquiries; that here is the poetic and ideological perspective of our Na't literature that has undergone such and such progressive phases and is currently engaged in such an issue or deliberation.

Looking at the contemporary ground realities with regard to Na't literature Sabih Rehmani observes that it is Mubeen Mirza who has perceived the poetic tradition of Urdu Na't in the ideological, literary and aesthetic perspective of our civilization in a manner, which, according to Sehr Ansari regards an addition to Na't identification. Others who we see in our days with analytical approach and can promote semantic innovation in the domain of Na't in the perspective of Urdu literature, civilization and new concepts and thoughts are Dr Nasir Abbas Nayyar and Kashif Irfan. We can expect from them decking the expanse of Na't with ideological and aesthetic novelty. Parallel to common scenario, some literary scholars blessed with acumen of criticism, have attributed the accomplishments of thought and vision to Na't. They strived with all their energies of head and heart for some glaring ventures which have expanded scientific, literary, and learning circle alongside the Na't criticism. Some of them include Dr Abdullah Abbas Nadwi, Dr Syed Yahiya Nashit, Dr Muhammad Ismael Azad Fatehpuri, Dr Aftab Ahmed Naqwi, Dr Shah Arshad Usmani, Naeem Siddiqui, Prof Hafeez Taib, Asghar Hussain Nazir Ludhyanwi, Prof Muhammad Iqbal Javed, Dr Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi, Hamayat Ali Shaer, Prof Muhammad Akram Raza, Rasheed Warsi, Dr Shams Badayuni, Dr Latif Hussain Adeeb, Dr Aasi Karnali, Dr Siraj Ahmad Qadri, Dr Afzaal Ahmed Anwar, Dr Shabbir Ahmed Qadri, Gohar Malsiani, Raja Rasheed Mahmood, Dr Fazal-ur-Rehman Sharar Misbahi, Dr Syed Waheed Ashraf Kachochawi, Dr Abd-un-Naeem Aziz, Dr Tanzeem-ul-Firdaus, Dr Shehzad Ahmad, Dr Muhammad Suhail Shafiq, Ghaus Mian, Manzar Arfi, Syed Muhammad Qasim, Sarwar Hussain Naqshbandi, Dr Shaukat Zarrin Chughtai, Dr Rahat Sultana, Sajid Siddiqi Lukhnowi, Ch Muhammad Yusuf Wirk, Dr Muhammad Hussain Mashahid Rizvi, Asad Sanai, Dr Daud Usmani, Khalid Shafiq and others. All of them endeavored in their respective way to

promote and embellish Na't and its literary status and earned honor. They struggled to spread the light of Prophetic love at a time when criticism of Na't was not in practice in Urdu literature; rather it was not considered even a department of literature. However, with the assertive efforts launched by these stalwarts of Na't literature, the state of things has changed and Na't is now in the mainstream of literature. Their work merits an enthusiastic study for they attached significance to Na't and its criticism and performed with an athletic muscle to take this genre to its due status.

Mubeen Mirza's inquiry opened for me a door to insight, facing a demand not of an individual but of time. A document or a book was the need of the hour to make aware the modern mind of Na't, its history, genetics, imperatives, requisites, directions and trends besides aesthetic and stylistic peculiarities of modern Urdu Na't, apart from the state of semantics and impressionistic dimensions. Nothing existed arranged at one place to accomplish effective communication on the subject. Nor had any study been conducted in the perspective of current era. The question, however, was enlightening and an eye-opener, for it was destined to rouse future-consciousness and its success dynamics. The book *Urdu Na't ki Shaeri Riwayat*—"Poetic Tradition of Urdu Na't" encompassing Na't's definition, its history and contemporary trends has been derived from the pursuit of the answer to Mubeen Mirza's question.

That is how Sabih perceives the truths of time and designs his dynamics to accomplish the projects.

Fateh Muhammad Malik:

Sabih Rehmani has been for long avidly busy in adorning and ornamenting Na't Rang, making it a hallmark of Urdu Na't poetry. He has collated in this compilation highly thought provoking write-ups by modern authorities and critics. It has been reminding me time and again of Allama

Iqbal whose fountainhead of religious interpretation is the noble character of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. While the religious leaders were advocating united India, Iqbal gave a loud call of reaching the blessed doorsteps of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and declared that all religion is Muhammad's slavery; otherwise you are infidels. This call matured into the two-nation theory, galvanized the Muslim community and made Pakistan a reality. Seen from this standpoint, Sabih Rehmani is permeating our spiritual and worldly life with peace and tranquility.

Ahmed Javed:

Sabih Rehmani is not merely engaged in a formal restoration of our Na't tradition; he is rather ardently striving to re-establish and invigorate our affinity with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, a link that provides us the justification to exist. If, with the grace of God, we triumph in fulfilling the spiritual and aesthetic requisites with pleasantness and profundity, the autumn haunting the Muslim Umma will fall. We are anxiously looking forward to the holy spring in our withered hearts.

The Poetic Tradition of Urdu Na't is enlightening us with new angles of conceiving Na't, clearing our thought and vision and opening to us new doors of Na't criticism for which we offer Sabih Rehmani our deep felicitations.

Shams-ur-Rehman Farooqi:

Na't has always been popular among Na't poets. Even non-Muslim poets have created Na't immersed in Prophet's love and fragrance. Our predecessors have not observed it as a genre of poetry whether Urdu or Persian. The practice has been to regard it a *qasida* (قصیدة panegyric) and evaluate it as per conditions stipulated for *qasida*. However, towards the end of 19th century, it was being considered *nazm* (نظم) and elements of the new format featured Na't. The poets having

no taste for *qasida* format composed it in *nazm* format without finally fixing whether it was *qasida* or some other form.

Later, Muhammad Hasan Askari wrote an enormous essay on Mohsin Kakorvi and introduced a new style of Na't criticism. However, probably this paradigm looked difficult or the critics lacked Askari's insight and Na't's creative perception.

I feel no hesitation in saying that we owe the contemporary trend of critical contemplation about Na't to Sabih Rehmani and his journal Na't Rang. Traditional formal Na't style has been in vogue for last many years because all Na't publications published Na't as a religious duty and secondly, Na't has been taken as an obligation like *qasida*. It is not heart but head that is involved.

Sabih's own Na't is devoid of any non-literary formality which has deprived our Na't of its true spirit. However, Na't Rang is consistently producing artistic and internal matters for discussion that has manifested Na't's actual features. Sabih's compilation contains refined disquisitions on Na't and will prove inevitable reference book for the students and scholars engaged in research work.

Dr Abu al-Kalam Qasimi:

Ever since Na't poetry is being created, it has been discussed how metaphoric and allusive literary style can be introduced in it, following the epic or qasida art. This has been pursued for the sole reason that the authorities on Urdu poetic literature felt how to stabilize Urdu Na't poetry such that it becomes a durable and permanent poetic tradition of higher literary values.

So higher quality of poetic art in Na't provided great contentment and it became discernable that a poet can add valuable creations to Urdu poetic literature by pursuing literary aesthetics in Na't. Sabih Rehmani has started for long

publishing articles in Na't Rang to set the artistic standards for Na't poetry. This compilation on Urdu Na't tradition producing disquisitions on the definition, history and trends in Na't poetry will greatly enhance Na't's poetic and artistic value. This is certainly a great work in new direction.

II. Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet—Ghalib awr Sanai Khawja

Abdul Rahman Bajnori wrote in his *Mahasan-e-Kalam-e-Ghalib—"Merits of Ghalib's Poetry"*: "There are two heavenly books in India: The Vedas and Dewan-e-Ghalib." Remarkable press coverage transpired on anniversaries of Ghalib in Pakistan and India; all literary journals, periodicals and magazines brought out special issues on the eve of his anniversaries. However, not a single reference is ever made to Ghalib's Na't poetry. Bajnori pointed out the revelatory stature of Ghalib's poetry which has its ideological connections with Islamic values. Yet people did not attempt to probe into this aspect of his poetry.

Na't Rang, however, turned towards it in 2001 and created a Ghalib Corner in its 12th issue for exploring Ghalib's Na't poetry. Many literary scholars of renown in India and Pakistan felt enthused to pen their unprecedented writings on Na't and Prophetic love gleaming in the poet laureate's historic poetic works. Less in Urdu and more in Persian, Ghalib's panegyrics form a major part of his creative experience. Some of the intellectuals have also written about paucity and scarceness of Ghalib's Na't. Yet they traced the presence of Na't in his prose especially letters and other accounts of the events of his life. Amazing that Ghalib has not composed Na't in Urdu regularly but a large number of Urdu poets have attempted Na't in Ghalib's prosodic measures and meters and produced some marvelous collections of Urdu Na't poetry. The Ghalib corner of Na't Rang roused the

Ghalib lovers to explore Na't element in his works so as to persuade the novices to tread the track.

Theses other than the write-ups published in the Ghalib Corner too contained useful references about Ghalib's panegyrics. Those who had a penchant for Ghalib's Na't compositions urged to put all writings together and bring out in a book form separately.

Dr Tahira In'am has observed in her nicely written dissertation on *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel*—"Sabih's Compilations: Forming up of new Na't Criticism" that deliberations concerning religious beliefs and concepts Ghalib and the Prophet's Na't have led to purification and maturity of thought and the inquisition and logical attitude so created can foster the Na't world conscience. Through these articles, Ghalib's style, similes, metaphors and innovative imagination have come to fore with a literary decorum that can add shine and expanse to the Na't poets' diction and style by fostering their poetic imagination in Ghalib's perspective.

The learned writers of the articles contained in the compilation have also unveiled in the light of structural factors of Ghalib's thought and mind the Na't elements concealed in his allusive lyrical expressions. This is a wondrous effect in the contexts of modern criticism while thought provoking essays were produced on accepting or rejecting this theme, giving birth to new angles of research in modern criticism. The level of knowledge and thought of the writers on benefitting Ghalib's poetry set up new standards for both Na't poetry and criticism.

The compiler has also done a great favor to the fond readers by selecting articles of those writers who present a sophisticated standard of Na't criticism. Their prolixity has brought forth fact-revealing thought about the history of Na't literature and provides reliance to the modern critics about analytical and diagnostic vigilance towards partial attitudes

or fact-evasive methods of the Na't critics. The writers have even further created new horizons of research by referring in their products to the sources that are the origins of Na't literature and its criticism.

Concluding his preface to the compilation, Sabih Rehmani has quoted a Persian verse by Ghalib, applauding the spirit to make effort, for effort opens door to various vistas of growth and evolution:

I asked: can a dust particle reach the sun?
He said: impossible!
I asked: what about making effort?
He said: that is admissible! (Ghalib)

Sabih has not only made an admissible effort of making a dust particle reach the sun, he has rather maneuvered to trap a galaxy of stars having their own moons and suns.

Dr Shams Badayuni:

Dr Shams Badayuni has observed in his essay on "*Ghalib awr Sanai Khawja*"—"*Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet): an Impression*" that Sabih Rehmani brought out Na't Rang in 1995, carried it on and raised it to higher literary standards of criticism and research. This journal from its very commencement remained singular and unique in promoting the case of Na't as a genre of Urdu literature. Soon it attracted prolific and authentic writers who produced articles on scientific research, criticism and religious aspects of Na't. Sabih Rehmani entertained the taste of Na't poets and Na't readers and the journal served as a source of productive, creative and informative correspondence with the readers and scholars.

He also wisely handled the sectarian, regional, and linguistic differences with impartiality and unbiased dialogue based on reasoning, patience, tolerance, harmony and moderation. This approach brought all the diverse writers on

one platform and worked for the promotion of Na't research, criticism and aesthetics together unitedly. Soon the Aqleem-e-Na't turned into Na't Research Center with a sizeable number of books on history, research and criticism of Na't, providing the facility to the scholars and students equally well.

Sabih Rehmani's services have been practically recognized in the form of Master, M Phil and PhD degrees from various universities in the field of Na't Research and Criticism.

His particular achievement has also been the revival of Na't tradition by introducing Ghalib corner in Na't Rang in October, 2001 in its 12th issue. Except for the thesis by Prof Zia Ahmed, all the rest of articles were managed for the corner and later included in this compilation. This effort paid back in the form of great success finding out that Ghalib created two Na't epic poems, three qasaid (panegyrics) and several verses in ghazel format. These Na't items by Ghalib have been analyzed and evaluated in the compilation which provides sound knowledge about Ghalib as a Na't poet. Hali wrote in Yadgar-e-Ghalib for reasons:

> "He took only two items from all acts of worship and religious obligations: the divine oneness and love for the Prophet ﷺ and his household. He would consider both these things as means of his emancipation."[81]

It was amazing for people when they found Ghalib was not a Na't poet. However, when this compilation by Sabih Rehmani came out, it dismissed all such notions and they felt glad to see about 700 Na't verses by Ghalib.

III. Mohsin Kakorvi: Literary and Ideological Aspects

Poetry indeed emanates from sentiment and sensuous perception. The impact of poetry, however, acts far deeper and expands into various directions. Poetry as per history of

[81] Hali, *Yadgar-e-Ghalib*.

civilization and culture plays an extraordinary role in shaping the social behaviors and cultural features of a people from battlefield to the corridors of power. The deserts, valleys, and mountain ranges are echoed with spelling songs, anthems, rhymes and rhythms of national and collective sentiments making even the realms of thoughts and philosophies shine with the brilliance of cosmic ideologies and concepts of universal realities—all put together fashion the human consciousness in their own ways. Great poetry influences thought and sentiment at the same time. Its meanings creep deep into several layers of human consciousness which every reader or listener reduces or widens according to his mental, perceptual, sensuous and sentimental caliber.

We have a strong feeling of this truth while studying possessive religious thought and paradigm. Religious poetry encompasses more of sentiment and sensuous feeling, thought and awareness and reaches out to a larger number and variety of readers, their trends and idiosyncrasies; this is a semantic reality of Na't poetry substantiated with solid proofs.

This reality, however, has been neglected because it has not been from this angle which is not without reasons. Even in the recent past, religious poetry would be set aside regarding it a matter of belief or devotion. Even the elite had been regarding it a source of gratification of the religious sentiment. This aspect of Na't has not been focused that diverse semantic structures, formation of trend and taste and construction of civilizational perception need to be attended. For this unfortunate indifference towards a large group of religious poets, no effort was ever initiated to understand their form and content and the aesthetic experience they poetically expressed, adding affluence to Urdu Na't poetry which was their due.

This aspect of Na't literature caught me and put me on the path of research, scrutiny and investigation. This struggle and inquisition has produced this book. Amir Minai and

Muhammad Hasan Askari did turn towards Mohsin and bring his artistic, linguistic and ideological greatness in the limelight but nobody probed it further. Moreover, his poetry was studied purely according to local poetic tradition and the attempt remained confined to his linguistic techniques and style alone. This only reduced his study to an outlined boundary.

So Mohsin was not understood from a modern viewpoint of criticism and analysis. The written work produced about his poetry is only rare. According to Muhammad Hassan Askari Mukhtar Siddiqui was the only poet who focused Mohsin in his work but that too could not be traced. Yet a portion referred to in a thesis on Mohsin Kakorwi's Na't presents the gist of Mukhtar Siddiqui's views about Mohsin:

> "This was stated that in Na't the cultural effects should be shown closer to Arab civilization. Efforts are in progress to oust 'Indianism' from Na't. Imposition of confines restrained several delicate, subtle and essential expressions, calling them bad innovations (*bida'*) and containing Messengership, Lord and servants. This aspect was put behind the back that it was poetry that brings along with it its own creative system which has built-in exaggeration, comparison, aesthetic expression and metaphoric adornment. The language one adopts to use for Na't carries along with it its culture and civilization. This is essential and according to the natural process."

We need to see these aspects, issues and discussions in a wider context and greater intellectual profundity, in the light of contemporary requisites. Past is past and our principles of criticism will take up a current discourse. We find a glimpse of this new criticism in a modern day literary youth Kashif Irfan who has laid emphasis on linguistic, structural, style

related and social studies in his article " The Justification of Mohsin Kakorwi's Na't Tradition in Modern Age" in which he has raised certain important questions.

The commencement of such a novel study of Na't literature would not only prove a useful means of fresh Na't understanding but will also generate an inclination towards fixation of the reality of manifestations of our civilization, its form and contents. The genre of Na't apparently only look a matter of belief and devotion but in its context is glowing a vast view of our civilizational, moral, political, social and ideological values. So we see that Na't literature has not only saved the semantic growth of our thoughts and life situations but has also removed the difference between ages through its effective communication and by developing a harmonious sensuous perception. We do not find it in other major literary genres. This is specific with Na't alone. Therefore, we can put our firm belief in the renaissance of our civilizational and national consciousness through the new era of promoting Na't as a literary genre reinforcing it with modern scientific viewpoints of research and criticism.

Sabih Rehmani writes in the preface to this compilation:

> "My work on compilation of Na't thought work contained in the creative writings of contemporary scholars and thinkers is the outcome of this Na't ideology. These writings were scattered in various journals, periodicals and magazines on Na't and literature and were not available to enthusiastic readers and young researchers in our universities to advance their work up to its logical conclusion. Even producing them without collating them into formal literary anthologies would also have proved fruitless as the readers do require proper perspective, logical arrangement and literary perspective for a creative frame of mind. My other compilations and this anthology on Mohsin aim

> only at one objective: removing the deficiency of thought provoking study material on Na't in the new state of things to promote identification of Na't. I firmly believe that this will usher in a bright era of sublime work on Na't in the time to come."

Dr Tehseen Firaqi:

Urdu was fortunate to produce poets of sublime order; however, Mohsin could never be replaced. This peerless Na't poet commenced his poetic career with Na't composition and ended it as well by writing a Na't, submitting his honor and devotion to the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The aesthetic gnosis and vehement Prophetic love would flow in his blood stream pervading his epics, panegyrics and other forms of Na't. Just go through his poetic works and you will find a rich variety of flowers with diverse aura of perfumes spread all around. His unique and innovative phrases, metaphors, similes and allusions give birth to an unfathomable semantic reservoir. Specific parsing, syntax and sentence structures add novelty to his diction and settings of poetic lines. His poetry vividly portrays his vast study of the Qur'an and hadith which he weaves into his expression with great poetic verve and aesthetic skill. If you seek to learn the implications of the similitude of the Qur'anic words قل هو اللہ on a grain of grams, you should study his poem "Chragh-e-K'aba". He learnt this art of miraculous expression from Nazami Ganjwi. Most of his poetry induces ecstasy as he himself has versified:

وجد میں آ کے قلم ہاتھ سے جائے نہ اچھل

"Lest the pen leaps from hand in ecstasy."

Compiling this anthology, Sabih Rehmani has not only promoted modern Na't but also opened a door to Mohsin's recognition as an illustrious poet of literary Na't.

IV. A study of Ameer Minai's Na't

Taking an account of Ghalib, Mohsin, Ahmad Raza Khan and Iqbal, the study of Ameer Minai's Na't was rather overdue. Surveying the Na't poetic works of these eminent and celebrated creative artists, Sabih Rehmani states that he has kept the following pertinent aspects in view:

- This is required to assess on practical bases that in the tradition of Urdu poetry what evolutionary phases of creative aesthetics, passion, expression and poetic diction the genre of Na't has experienced, and what intellectual and linguistic changes have come about in the process.
- Examining Na't's progress, we need to understand the political, social and civilizational factors that have been influencing our Na't poetry and literature and to what extent it has absorbed the influence.
- Besides the expression of religious and devotional essence, Na't is a literary genre as well. Why our literary critics then shirked their responsibility and why had they a narrow view about Na't criticism? How do they justify their negligence about its scientific interpretation and analysis?
- Can we adopt the style of criticism and analysis about Na't poets, which we exercise in case of great poets like Mir, Sauda, Ghalib, Mushafi, Atish, Iqbal and others in finding their semantic constitution within the framework of their artistic features and ideological and intellectual harmony with modern times?

These investigations are pertinent to all these studies in order to perform criticism on merit according to the established principles of literature. This is wrong and unjustified that Na't should not be subjected to any literary criticism because it is a religious matter; Na't is absolutely a

literary genre and must be assessed as per literary rules. The literary study and analysis of Na't has been in vogue during last three decades and has enviably progressed like other literary genres such as *ghazel, nazm, afsana*, etc.

According to poetic history, our Na't poets have been conforming to all the standards that were considered inevitable for creative literature. Had it been recognized seven or eight decades ago, the Na't literature too would have been equally rich and abounding. For last three decades, Na't is being evaluated as a literary genre and its quantitative as well as qualitative output is inspiringly affluent because the senior critics of Urdu literature have now been writing on it as literature. The work that is now in progress on Na't in the universities of Pakistan and India can be presented to other departments as an example. This progress has bright future in manifesting its kernel potentials of literary aesthetics and semantic affluence, attaining to its real artistic stature.

Ameer Minai was one of the last representatives of Lukhnow School of poetry. However, a pleasant Delhi School's tenor glimpses in his poetry. A gladdening expression of Lukhnow style's delicacy, imagery, colorful presentation and depiction of beloved's personage blended with Delhi style's simplicity, saintly feel and contentment provide us with a novel and unique creative display in Ameer's poetry. His Na't poetry too is no exception to it.

Besides his poetic works, being a scholar of Persian and Arabic as well, he accomplished a unique task of producing lexicon that is serving its scholarly purpose even today. Jamiah Karachi has recently published his "*Surmai-e-Baseerat*" and "*Mi'yar al-Aghlat*" that prove its validity even after 150 years.

Critics and analysts however could not attach to his Na't poetry its due significance. Mohsin attracted attention due to his innovative similes and metaphors and coining unique phrases that had a Hindi touch. However, Ameer received a

thin response and hardly became a subject. Only a few critics have briefly touched this subject in certain magazines. That made me think of working on this compilation to celebrate his Na't befittingly and present his Na't in the perspective of modern thought at a comprehensive level.

Both senior and fresh literary critics have attempted to write on Ameer's Na't. They have worked according to their respective standpoints. The articles on his Na't included in this collation have evaluated and analyzed his Na't poetry according to modern theories, concepts and thoughts on criticism. A conscious effort has been made to ensure that each article concentrates on some specific aspect of Ameer's Na't. On the one hand, these articles pave the way for smooth and comprehensive understanding of his Na't and on the other highlighting some aspects of classical poetic style in addition to harmonizing its semantics with the modern poetic mind-set.

There are various aspects to his art and thought, each having its own significance. It will not be untrue to say that most conspicuous and valuable aspect of his poetic art is Na't. This is not mere faith or devotion that makes me say that. We find its evidence in his creative tenor and proclivity that has permeated whole of his poetic works and observe his deep regards for the Prophetic love which he considers a great honor for affinity and allegiance to the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Even his critics have observed that most expressive manifestations of his creative affluence, ideological affinity and artistic prolificacy and enablement are found mostly in his Na't. That enables us to assert that Na't is the most striking reference of his poetic accomplishments. Ameer Minai has himself claimed with great pride:

میری شہرت کا سبب مدحِ پیمبرؐ ہے امیر
ورنہ اربابِ سخن میں مرا رتبہ کیا ہے

It's Messenger's Na't that has given me fame
Or else who among people knows my name!

V. Poetic Works of Raza, Ideological and Artistic Aspects—Kalam-e-Raza, Fikri wa Fanni Zawiay

This cannot be negated that in the history of Urdu language and literature, Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan Barelvi has not been given that status which he truly deserved. Dr Khurshid Rizvi, in his brief flap on the Compilation: Kalam-e-Raza, Fikri wa Fanni Zawiay—*Poetic Works of Raza, Ideological and Artistic Aspects*, has observed:

> "The Muslims in the subcontinent are largely devoted to Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan and his Na't poetry is considered most popular and sublime. Popularity, however, sometimes becomes a barrier as in the case of Maulana; the emotional profusion of his followers and seekers obstructed fixation of his true scholarly and literary standing."

Prof Fateh Muhammad Malik has quoted in his intellectual account a pertinent question raised by Sabih Rehmani:

> "I repeat my perception with responsibility that despite his overwhelming popularity, literary history's unconcern towards Maulana and neglecting his ideological, linguistic and artistic features and properties in contemporary literary themes and analytical studies is a question mark for our literary criticism and a point to ponder for our literary tradition."

Prof Malik then holds:

> "This book is an answer to this question; it has emerged from this aspiration: 'We should raise afresh a favorable environment for mulling over Maulana's poetry from literary angles. For this, we

> have to convince our literary celebrities and poets to open doors of critical analysis and discernment on Maulana's poetic works. Dissertations have been included in this book from this viewpoint.' I am sure Sabih's aspiration will be gratified and the theses anthologized in it will add a new chapter to our literary criticism."

Dr Tahira In'am has evaluated this issue in a different manner. In her analytical account *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel* "Sabih's Compilations: Forming up of new Na't Criticism" she has observed:

> "Maulana Ahmed Raza's erudition should not be regarded a barrier for his literary esteem. Instead, it seems imperative to scrutinize how his learnedness has reinforced his poetic stature. Indeed the impact of his poetic experiences kept sneaking in to literary tradition, leaving out criticism and perspicacity. Nonetheless, Sabih Rehmani's peculiar venture is the resolve and execution of the movement to stimulate the unspoken and unperceived practices. He has declared it a big question for modern criticism to ignore ideological, artistic and linguistic aspects of Ahmed Raza's poetry in our modern themes and analytical studies. However, this negligence on the part of literary critics may not be intentional and biased. Yet the fact remains that lacking religious erudition though, literary scrutiny of his or any other poet's work should have been admissible. In fact seeking attention towards Maulana's poetry, criticizing his art and providing a focus to the angles of literary reflections was the endeavor that this compilation has initiated. He writes: 'The environment of criticism and perspicacity demands an open atmosphere, whereas

> we have surrounded Maulana with a devotional circle which is impeding the committed writers who scrutinize poetic works in objective manner in the light of literary standards."

In his introduction: *'Understanding Na't poetry of Ahmed Raza: a few submissions'* Sabih Rehmani has described a scientific vision to understand the literary realities of past and present. He finds that Ghalib and Iqbal have been diversely interpreted by a large number of scholars and critics in their respective periods of time. People with different visions, standpoints, philosophies and ideologies have looked at them from different angles conferred on them by the historical, cultural, civilizational, societal and cultural undercurrents shaping the literary values. People of a new era interpret the given creative work from a new vision. Semantic perception of a poet, therefore, does not confine to probing into his diction alone. It is the compatibility of aesthetic, literary, sensuous and intellectual perception and evaluation of his creative experience with the current era that evolves its modern interpretation. Contingent on this principle, a poet's relevance and congruity with new age comes to fore. That is the real literary aspect that makes him understandable and germane to the new era.

The compilation of such disquisitions present us these interpretations that have explored Ahmed Raza's poetry in the new contemporary perspective and excavated literary realities which remained concealed or neglected owing to an inconsiderate literary approach of studying poetry or any other piece of literary art. It will help determine Maulana's literary tallness evaluating his creative and poetic expression and aesthetic experience, detached from his religious status, against the laid down contemporary literary standards.

V. Divine Disclosures of Seerat in Urdu Na't—Urdu Na't main Tajalliyat-e-Seerat

Words cannot describe how elevated and exalted the station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is. The pen cannot encompass the height of his excellence. Indeed, his being is such a gift and sublime favor bestowed by Allah Almighty on the universe that is beyond our comprehension. Almighty Allah created His beloved Prophet ﷺ as the best, the greatest and an exemplary, most perfect and beautiful model both in his character and physical being for the entire world.

When a poet, entranced in Prophetic love, expresses his devotion to the beloved Messenger, he versifies, in creative affluence, his adorable attributes and examples from his noble Seerah either in allusive style or by way of symbols or hinting at historical references. In literary prose, writers substantiate their expression by adding relevant poetic verses to the text. Especially the Seerat writers embellish their prose with Na't verses. Some of our poets have accentuated in their poetry different aspects of Seerah drawing a sketch of Prophetic morality. Presentation of Prophetic model of life in poetic form can go a long way in rousing a passion to benefit from Seerah acquiring awareness and sentiment of submitting to Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ in psychic and physical actions.

Sabih states that most of the treatises included in this compilation have been published in Na't Rang, which manifests a collective consciousness. The poets whose verses have been quoted in these writings have not included Seerah elements in epic form; this has been their revelatory creative experience instead of ratiocination or a rational attempt. These verses are some divine disclosures of the holy Prophet's Seerah effulgence that have illumined the aesthetic experience of poets in an unconscious manner. Such an ecstatic state of mind brightens the poet's creative expression.

Dr Tahira In'am, while taking a comprehensive analytical account of the compilation in her book: *Talifat-e-Sabih*

Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel "Compilation of Sabih Rehmani: Forming up of new Na't Criticism" has scrutinized the contents of anthology and observed:

> "The Prophetic Seerah has been a subject of Na't in all ages. The predilections and tastes of literary eras and individual styles of creative expressions have been diversifying the presentation of this subject in poetic art. The examples given in the collated writings, limited though, reveal the truth that comprehensiveness of Seerah is not confined to a few measures of expression; rather the literary environment, the temper and mind-set and ways and manners of modernism and innovation of every era have always received finishing from the largesse of Seerah. It warrants the comparative and analytical study of prevalent trends of all ages. The miracle of Seerah is that the thematic proliferation inscribes the impression of Prophetic attributes in hearts instead of the sublimity of poet's art. Attaining to such a preponderant impression should be the objective of a poet versifying the Prophetic Seerah."

This compilation is an endeavor to make the study of Na't and Seerah a novel experience from a distinctive angle. A human effort has its limitations that cannot be encroached upon. When Seerah becomes the subject, expression contracts and shrinks. This compilation, therefore, is an inferior and humble attempt that may bring us blessings and success in other projects, prays Sabih Rehmani!

Shah Misbah Uddin Shakeel:

> The like of Muhammad was not, nor is, nor will ever be,
> Anyone of his rank was not, nor is, nor will ever be.

I heard this Na't verse in 1996 from Sabih Rehmani himself in a Na't gathering that made me quiver, weep and lose myself. I felt it was rather the voice of the whole of human history. When I presented him my book, *"Seerat-e-Ahmad-e-Mujtaba"*, I think I wrote this verse and submitted: this book is the interpretation of this verse of yours. From Seerat Mujtaba to Seerat Album, Sabih Rehmani never separated from me. His verses, along with other poets, have been most excellently conveying my thoughts and sentiments. So I always felt him far near me. His Na't poetry, Na't recitation, Na't Rang, and his endeavors to promote Na't literature through Na't Research Center have always been exalting his belovedness in my heart. I have received the manuscript of his *"Urdu Na't main Tajalliyat-e-Seerat* (Seerat Beams in Urdu Na't)" at a time when my seeing and hearing have reduced, memory and other senses have gone feeble, and I am not much used to reading and writing now. However, out of my love for Sabih Rehmani and owing to the significance of the subject matter, what I have been able to gather is heartening, for this book is an excellent attempt to convey Seerat contents in poetic form. I believe it will be useful for all of us including those who are working on Seerat projects.

VI. Iqbal's Na't Poetry—a Study of Content and Style

In careful estimation, if we make a selection of the exalted and thought provoking themes of Urdu poetry, one of them would indeed be essentially attributed to Iqbal. The truth is though the other way round. Iqbal's thought and poetry merit a vast and all-inclusive ideological, philosophical, artistic, analytical and semantic study and record that would encompass all its creative dynamics, metaphoric subtleties and structural novelties in their entirety. What holds it good is the incessant literary criticism being wrought ever since Iqbal's rise to his genius to date. Those who have taste for the history

of literature do conceive the dignity of a literary genius also in new vistas of the study of his works compatible with the vicissitudes of time. The need of new readings becomes a profitable venture in changing days of literary creativity. Iqbal, the poet laureate, is the one such genius of our poetic tradition! Whatever has so far been written about him is a glowing portion of the tradition of our evaluative literature. Nevertheless, Iqbal holds even today the station of a fresh and rousing study of literary investigation, for we come across novel and undiscovered inquiries about his poetic art and philosophy even today and exchanging ideas on these points enrich our tradition of literary criticism.

I have always cherished to study the topmost Urdu poets as a student of Na't literature or panegyric poetry. I sought to know how and to what extent they felt motivated, inspired and inclined towards the subjects and themes of the Prophet's panegyrics. Finding a trace of this penchant in a poet, I enthuse over creeping into his Na't verve and thought work. Given that this venture tests one's patience to pick and choose Na't elements from the totality of a poet's creative mass because a cursory glance of a poetic work only intensifies thirst, I do it with avidity and hunger.

It is comparatively easy to find samples of Prophetic praise poetry from the works of poets who create panegyrics under a system of eulogistic poetic dynamism. However, the search of such examples in poets lacking such a system of thought entails a serious effort to find versified manifestations of love and praise of the venerable Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This has been my utmost endeavor to explore and present some rays of the blessed light out of a flooded effulgence of Prophetic love's creative energy from amongst the echoes of louder voices articulating the Holy Messenger's ﷺ hymnology. *"Ghalib awr Sanai Khawja"* (Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet) was compiled in the same vein. In the era of thought journey of creative Na't proclivity and the growth of its

artistic approaches and literary perspectives, it aimed to bring to fore the names of the esteemed chiefs of Urdu poetry who made panegyrics, though at a lesser scale, a noteworthy feature of their creative art. What interests the most is the fact that with such poet laureates, praise poetry is given a unique master treatment and a distinct creative standard. Here I feel it inevitable to explore Na't-thought and acquire comprehension of its undercurrents in the poetic works of great Urdu poets to exalt the Na't-conscious poetic mind-set to the higher strata of this universe of creative art and panegyric thought. This will indeed widen the horizon of literary Na't writing. On the other hand, in this milieu of disintegration where the political, social, civilizational and literary environments are undergoing successive phases of change, this is the pre-requisite of time for the stability and survival of literature and civilization that we develop and enhance our creative energies and means of recognition through all possible means. That will strengthen our collective unity and integration at the same time.

This book *"Iqbal's Na't Poetry—a Study of Content and Style"* is also a continuation of the same inquisition. It pursues to mirror the Prophet's love permeating Iqbal's thought and augment the life-blowing light spread over the creative skyline that has not only dyed his panegyric expression in revolution hue, but has also garbed Na't creating style into such an outfit of poetic diction as to generate blossoming rapturous states of Prophetic love. His panegyrics, besides blowing an ardent love of the Prophet ﷺ into the Muslims of Iran, Afghanistan and the sub-continent, injected its warmth and ecstasy into the body organism of the entire Islamic world. Iqbal fashioned Na't into his peculiar style and equipped it with a renaissance of love revolution. He was not a Na't poet in traditional sense. Nor do we find any creative signs of traditional Na't manifest in his poetry. Yet an illumination of Prophetic love gushes out in his poetic

expressions effusively wherever the soil allows sprouting. In his poetic experience, it is Iqbal's love for the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ that forms the basis of his faith. His love is not mere a contact; it is, rather, a deep, sincere and unshakable relation. The Na't manifested in his poetry in an unfelt manner against the perspective of his personal life and national and cultural environment is in truth his fervent love discomfort for the beloved Prophet ﷺ. As compared to traditional Na't poetry, Iqbal's encomiums are the expression of an altogether different thought work, a vigorous passion and a feeling of new form and content. His poetic thought and creative experience finds the exalted Messenger of Allah as the first of the believers and a perfect human whose model of life is the pattern to follow for Iqbal's *qalandar* (a dauntless next-worldly human), *derweish* (a self-denying servant of Allah), a God-conscious personality and an entranced being.

A survey of critiques and evaluations about Iqbal unfolds that much has been written from this viewpoint, not titled as Iqbal's Na't though. Common title given to his panegyrics is Iqbal's Prophetic love (and not Iqbal's Na't in conventional terms), for the sole reason that we do not find any exclusively traditional form of Na't in his poetry. However, his critics have brought forth the elements of Na't and formally discussed its intellectual aspects even while writing about his Prophetic love.

Na't, its contents and patterns, molds and styles of expression and communication employed by Iqbal manifest various aspects of his Na't poetry—his Prophetic love, which is the mainstay of his poetic imagination and hallmark of artistic dynamics. It colorfully blossoms in his thought, poetic sentiment and his feel for the art of poetry found boldly manifest in his diction. True, conventional art of composing Na't in vogue is not congruent to his art of poetry; nor can he be included amongst Na't poets at any traditional scale as are

other Na't poets considered who are producing this genre under their pen. However, panegyric elements abound in his poetic works in such a unique and conspicuous manner that we do not afford missing them. If we do, that would only be a deliberate negation of a consistent creative manifestation of love ecstasy of a love-bound poet of the Prophet ﷺ, like Iqbal.

The articles by eminent writers included in this anthology are a candid affirmation of this truth. They have also fixed the value and status and the import of this aspect of Iqbal's poetry on the basis of his entire poetic corpus.

These writings prove that Iqbal's poetry is devoid of the Na't we find in vogue. This however, does not imply that his poetry is bereft of the essence of Na't. Panegyrics are the lifeblood of his poetic art. The fact which claims appreciation is that for Na't tradition in Urdu literature, Iqbal's style and poetic dynamics are different and singular. We feel in his expression the heart throb echoed with his deep and intense divine love, devotion and propriety for the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Simultaneously, the diction he employs in the vein of Na't utters, loud and clear, the collective agony and anguish generated from our cultural, civilizational and national pain and discomfort. He exalted this subject in his poetry to a transcendental level of intellectual thought. We observe it most effectively and impressively poetized when he puts this thought across, attired in his love for the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This is the unique feature that bestows on his poetic art singularity, unprecedented verve and innovation.

The intellectual and semantic sequel of a great creative artist manifests in many ways. After compiling this anthology, I felt that, apparently though, it is a study of Iqbal's style of panegyrics or poetry of Prophetic love. Nonetheless, if studied in totality and detail, these articles may accrue evaluative and intellectual ways and means for the conscientious reader for a creative and analytical understanding of a panegyric poetic

experience, which opens up new vistas of penetrating layers of meanings and delving deeper into understanding of poetic dynamics.

The articles included in this book have been acquired with great care, concern and responsibility from a large reservoir, for the purpose was not merely compiling an anthology; rather the objective was to collect most significant writings on this subject to produce a set of essentials that would encompass the intellectual, literary and stylistic aspects of the subject. You can find that the articles included in it are written by our literary polymaths and celebrities of the creative world who have illumined an age with their luminous works and people of contemporary era have obtained from them vision and guidance. Apart from that, certain articles have been specially written for this book and have first time appeared on the printed page. This venture intended to represent the men of vision and criticism from three generations who made themselves existentially felt over last three decades through their thought provoking evaluative writings in the realm of our literature.

Dr Tehseen Firaqi:

One of the most significant aspects Dr Tehseen Firaqi has encompassed in his scholarly written treatise in *"Iqbal and Sanai Khawaja"* included in this compilation is attaining close proximity to the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He quotes from one of Allama Iqbal's letters to Niaz Uddin written on January 2, 1923. Niaz Uddin had mentioned blessing of having a view of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his letter. Replying him, Allama Iqbal wrote:

> "I felicitate you! It is a great blessing these days. We must extensively recite the holy Qur'an so that heart gets affinity with Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The genetics of this affinity does not make it mandatory to know the meanings of the Qur'an

> as well. Just reciting it with sincerity suffices. I firmly believe that the Prophet is alive ﷺ. The people of our times can also benefit from him the way the Companions used to seek his favors."[82]

Once, on the eve of Eid Milad-un-Nabi in Lahore, Iqbal advised three methods to maintain the passions of conformity and proactivity, of which the third one is graded as most important. He stated:

> "The third method, though difficult, must be elaborated. This is abundant remembrance of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and that also in a style that human heart mirrors various aspects of Prophethood. The state of being that used to manifest fourteen centuries before from the exalted personage of Allah's Messenger ﷺ should transpire today in our hearts. Maulana Rum says:
> Man is vision and the rest of it is flesh,
> And the vision is that of the Beloved."

These extracts make it clear what diligence and hard work Iqbal must have exercised in creating the affinity with the holy Prophet ﷺ and making Muhammad's spirit a part of his person and spiritual self; and what intellectual paradoxes and philosophical intricacies he must have experienced.

Muhammad Suhail Umar:

Iqbal is unique in his Na't poetry as well; however, its reason is known but effect extinct. With Iqbal the moral essence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the reality and the ultimate objective of existence. Like Arabic Na't tradition, he has regarded the Messenger's ﷺ manhood and historical personage as the absolute excellence and extract of existence. Like the message he brought, his divine self too enshrines

[82] Sahifa, October, 1973, p. 238.

corresponding cosmic and eternal elements. Iqbal's elaborate visit to these elements in his poetry is matchless and finds no parallel in our poetic literature.

He has deployed his mystic vision in full in the study of his holy person and blessed the spiritual mind with this gnostic certitude that the oneness principle found in him such an expression where duality in the reality and its manifestation cease to exist. This is what the traditional mysticism believes. In sum, if one seeks to observe the Prophetic realities in history that is possible only by studying Iqbal's Na't with persistence.

These are aspects of Iqbal's Na't that make the formal criticism fall far short of mark. This is the aspect of Iqbal's poetic works on which the study found is just scanty. Sabih Rehmani is a good Na't poet who is working for Na't and Na't studies passionately with consistent style. This is the aspect he has presented in his compilation *"Iqbal's Na't Poetry—a Study of Content and Style"*. A valuable book, it is a great addition to the criticism on Iqbal.

VII. Na't Tradition and its Evolution in Pakistani Languages— Pakistani Zabanon main Na't: Riwayet-o-Irtiqa

The study of representative poetry of a society is highly beneficial in understanding its internal conditions, basic realities and features of its way of living. It is so because a poet, may he be a subjectivist, individualist or romanticist of a higher order cannot be completely aloof from society and the life around. Nor is poetry created in vacuum. It has a social perspective. Besides the poet's individual experiences, the society's collective and social trends also form a part of his poetic experience. Poetry, therefore, apart from individualistic overtones, reflect the mental habits and ideological inclinations that manifest features of a civilization and social usages. The history of literature proves that poetic

literature of every era of every language, in fact, mirrors the social and cultural mind-set of a civilization which emanates from a given region.

From this standpoint, we can call the vast expanse of sub-continent a museum of languages where we find diversity of different dialects, languages and regional accents in different periods of history putting up varietyese. Our homeland too is not devoid of this novelty. More or less, 76 dialects and regional languages are the national assets of our social dynamics: Sindhi, Pashto, Baluchi, Punjabi, Saraiki, Hindko, Barahwi, Kohistani, khawar and scores of others. Each one of these languages has its specific span of influence, playing a positive role in life progression and social continuity. All these languages also possess huge reservoirs of poetic and other literary genres. They are not limited to meeting social needs alone; they have great potential of aesthetic expression of ideas and sentiments as well. It is this potential of languages and art of expression and literature that constitutes mental behavior and collective perspicacity of a people.

All these languages spoken in Pakistan sprout from separate fountains. Their regional thought and social inclinations fashion their individuality. Yet they are resonated with a common echo that cannot be unheeded. This echo is an expression of that fundamental thought which provides these languages with the essence that proves a means to shape a particular perceptivity from the individual dispositions to the collective cultural manifestations. This makes quite evident that the philosophy of life, civilizational traditions and spiritual and moral values of the people who speak these languages have a common origin. These languages are fostered by a similar system of moral values and an equivalent and corresponding civilizational life on the basis of a particular paradigm. The genres of literature these languages produce though come from different geographical regions and are apparently divergent and different from one another, yet

inwardly and spiritually they are harmonious, akin and alike. They are reeved together in the same relationship like a chain of pearls. Despite divergence, the ideological and literary harmony among them is conspicuous. The expressions are different but the fundamental sentiment is the same because the basic reference of their literatures is Islam, Islamic culture and above all the ardent love for Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ. It is this basic reference and ideological foundation that develops the inhabitants of all the regions of Pakistan into the guards of our geographical and ideological frontiers and consolidates them into one soul.

The intellectuals of civilizational and cultural sciences hold that irrespective of the rugged process of evolution and diversity of objective realities, civilizations are founded on a unified base. Analyzing inter-civilization differences, we can classify them into two categories. The materialism and spiritualism are two social behaviours wide apart. Materialism gives birth to self-conceit, wider social distances and multiple societal maladies sequel to individualistic tendencies: indifference, intolerance, disintegration, laissez-faire morality, hubris, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, self-centered behavior, etc. On the contrary, spiritualism spawns social integration, multi-cultural harmony, altruism, moderation, tolerance, sacrifice and superior noble conduct. A society permeated with Islamic teachings and Prophetic love grows individually as well as collectively. Everybody cares for everybody's needs and the society behaves like a training institution of selflessness. A study of literature from this standpoint becomes interesting and thought-provoking.

Na't is created in all our regional languages and is a common literary experience at ethnic level. These languages became a fertile soil for Na't which proved effective in purifying our life of capitalist morality. The civilizational and literary creativity flourished and in a few decades we saw a rapid growth in number of Na't books in all Pakistani

languages. Na't was a creative wave pursued with verve and literary zeal. Visitation to Medina and Umra became a popular activity and people from every nook and corner of the homeland would enthuse to avail the opportunity. This overwhelming social sentiment found prolific expression in the poetic experience of all our languages and cemented together the Pakistani society into an impregnable bastion of Islam.

All the Pakistani languages, in this way, have played an esteemed role in promoting and expanding and enriching the national language Urdu. The vocabulary, idioms and phrases of these languages found usage in Urdu; creative works of historic significance are being translated into regional languages and this inter-language renaissance of national literature has augmented the quality and quantity of literary output. Various universities in all the provinces have proved literary centers that are promoting creative experience of Na't among poets of all the Pakistani languages.

This anthology *"Na't Tradition and its Evolution in Pakistani Languages"* intends to further the cause of this revolutionary struggle collecting the talent to grow and sail in all directions, shaping it into a pride feature of our civilization. The trend to advance criticism and research will go a long way in enhancing the aesthetic and creative values at regional level, which ultimately pay back in modernizing the study of Na't on the grounds of research and criticism. The articles included in this compilation were written to fulfil different literary requirements. Collating them into this book is the first step towards our destination. I hope the researchers and scholars will feel motivated towards making more and better contributions to our ideological, scientific and research endeavor and many more lamps will be lit with this flame.

Dr Tahira In'am has observed in her treatise on the subject:

> "Common beliefs and ideology knit closely the linguistic and literary relations and creative experiences of a nation speaking different languages. They grow mutually. Despite a fractional diversity in local cultural elements, the same soul enlivens their bodies. Whatever the place and time, the vital force of the ardent love of the holy Prophet ﷺ perpetuates their collective existence. Arabic, Persian or Pakistani languages hardly matter as languages where faith comes in. Literary expressions, similes, metaphors, allusions, symbols and their mysteries are common because they spring from the same fountain. If we collate the panegyric pieces of art from all these languages, their literary charisma resulting from their civilizational, cultural and religious commonality remains undeniable. From Arabic passing through Persian to Urdu, the external as well as internal elements of Na't are found in all Pakistani languages abreast, corresponding and attuned."

Dr Rauf Parekh published the proceedings of an International Conference organized by a university on Pakistani languages policy, on October, 10 2010. Sabih Rehmani's book *Pakistani Zabanon main Na't: Riwayet-o-Irtiqa* proved a great success on the occasion. He writes:

> "Aptly titled and just published by Karachi's Na't Research Centre, the book deserves kudos as it successfully captures the essence and brief history of the genre of Na't in different Pakistani languages. These languages include Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, Seraiki, Brahvi, Kashmiri, Hindko, Gojari and Campbellpuri boli.
>
> Sabih Rehmani, a well-known Na't-khwan, poet and editor of magazine Na't Rang, has edited and

> compiled in this volume 26 articles on the history and development of Na't in these Pakistani languages. The articles included are written by some of the well-known scholars of Pakistani languages, such as, Memon Abdul Majeed Sindhi, Kamil-ul-Qadri, Wahid Bakhsh Buzdar, Nawaz Ali Shauq, Khatir Ghaznavi, Afaq Siddiqi, Hafeez Taib, In'am-ul-Haq Kausar, Mehr Abdul Haq, Tahir Taunsavi, Abdur Rahman Brahvi, Sabir Afaqi, Ghulam Hussain Azhar, Arshad Mahmood Nashad and some others.
>
> In his introduction to the book Rehmani says that literature is essentially a reflection of the society and environment it is created in. Literature of any language mirrors the in-depth feelings and cultural affiliations of the people. So do the Pakistani languages, and their poetry proves that these languages are tied together with a common thread that runs through them all since the cultural, social and historical background and religious ethos are shared by them", he adds.

The articles included in the book prove that the poetry of almost every Pakistani language has a long history of composing Na't — the poetry praising, paying respect and expressing love for the Prophet of Islam Muhammad ﷺ. It is this shared characteristic, a common heritage, among other things, that brings Pakistani languages closer.

Iftikhar Arif:

Both Iftikhar Arif and Dr Anwaar Ahmed in the book's blurbs have paid tributes to Sabih Rehmani for this unique effort. They say that every language of Pakistan expresses almost similar emotions of extreme love for the Prophet (ﷺ). The creative journey of Na't genre in the Pakistani regional

languages has been described in detail in the book. Iftikhar Arif says that comparing the Na't tradition in Pakistani languages with the ones found in other major languages of the Islamic world brings a joy and satisfaction that if our languages do not get ahead of the other languages they are at least not behind them when it comes to praising the Prophet of Islam ﷺ."[83]

He regards it a matter of pride and honor that Islamic values in the form of Na't find rich expression in all Pakistani languages and the poetic standard of Na't in these languages especially attracts our attention. The articles written by the renowned scholars enhance the literary value of the book and make it a gift for the world of literature.

VIII. The Poetic Tradition of Urdu Hamd—Urdu Hamd ki Sh'eri Riwayat

Hamd composition is a poetic genre of olden times. Its thematic expanse needs no evidence. The concept of a deity has been a basic element of thought and expression among the followers of all religions. The gnosis of the creator is a requisite of human consciousness. Sabih observes:

> "The gnosis of our Creator and expression of our contact with Him is in fact the potential or enablement of human soul which on the one hand impedes his defenselessness or extinction in the universe and on the other makes his life meaningful by associating him with all-encompassing reality and origin from origination to eternity."[84]

Sabih has put on a display the spectacle of Urdu Hamd poetry with glaring features from its initial stage to modern times. He has collated essays and treatises on the concept of Hamd, its tradition, history, evolution, thematic spread and

[83] Dr Rauf Parekh, *The Daily Dawn*, October 10, 2010.
[84] Poetic Tradition of Urdu Hamd, p. 12.

intellectual and artistic perspectives. In the initial variants of Urdu poetry, from the Hamd poetry by Sufis to its growing phases from one era to the next, this pleasing and beautiful genre has been arraying on paper the divine presence, eternity and glory integrating with human consciousness, art and standards of time. A literary survey brings to fore its both common literary level and the level of higher intellectual activity. In classical age, it took variety of forms while in modern times the intellectual innovations have made it reflect the literary movements and concepts enshrined in the history of literature. According to Sabih Rehmani:

> "All significant concepts governing the ideological cutout and system of life of a civilization, in fact, premise on the concept of God. The more this concept is exalted, profound and inclusive, the more expansive, profound and aesthetically charismatic will be that civilization's structures and constitutions."[85]

How far this value has been integrative between Islamic civilization and Hamd poetry may be assessed through criticism and survey of this genre. To make this book a basic document Sabih has been vigilant in compiling a sounder critical study of Hamd poetry.

Dr Tahira In'am writes in her valuable treatise on *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel* Sabih Rehmani: Forming up of new Na't Criticism:

> An exalted aspect of Sabih's prelude to the anthology is the detailed survey of magazines and journals dedicated to Hamd and Na't literature, serving as explicatory publications. Describing the significance and value of these origins, he has comprehensively put forth the essential feature of every periodical. It is amazing to look at the list of

[85] Poetic Tradition of Urdu Hamd, p. 15.

these creative and critical works; that a trend could not be set to scrutinize the genre of Urdu Hamd according to the superior critical yardsticks in the literary, intellectual and artistic perspective. However, Sabih Rehmani has rightly directed the aggrandizing, expanding and glorifying struggle for the genre of Na't towards Hamd poetry as well. He well arranged the collated dissertations; yet he could not feel at ease and produced an additional study titled "*Brief study of Urdu Hamd Literature*" to facilitate the critics and researchers. This work is in itself an illustrious attempt towards authenticity and enrichment of material. Dr Aziz Ahsan, a highly well-read scholar on Hamd and Na't literature, writes:[86]

"The amount of material provided in this booklet is not, so far, available even in tomes on the subject."[87]

IX. Na't Nagar ka Basi (The Resident of Na't Abode), Dr Syed Abu al-Khair Kashfi

The explorer, mentor, guide, spiritual guardian and a compassionate, divinely motivated literary friend of Syed Sabih Rehmani imbued him with his pristine Na't vision way back in 1993. While bringing out Na't Rang Sabih maintained a persistent and creative liaison with Dr Kashfi; he would discuss with him his Na't paradigm and the war plan to conquer the literary field in the sub-continent and, later, on the globe. This compilation has a specific significance in unveiling Kashfi's Na't ideology, philosophy, vision and his spiritually creative ecstasy that kept him

[86] *Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel* Sabih Rehmani: Forming up of new Na't Criticism, p. 133.
[87] Urdu Hamd Literature, p. 6.

immersed in the 'Kausar-o-Tasneem waters' of Prophetic love which was contagious and proved a source of immense inspiration for the Na't lovers. Writing preface to this anthology, Sabih writes:

> "In the prevailing haunting spiritual darkness spread under the Tarraqi Pasand Tehreek of Urdu literature, the literary combatants like Dr Kashfi committed themselves to create and embellish their aesthetic experiences with firm religious fundamentals and divine signs that form part of our faith. He would beat the drum to spread this penchant and turn the literary Na't world into a paradise of aesthetic experience. He was heading the caravan of critics who were staunch and steadfast Muslims."

Sabih Rehmani applied Prof Munawar's remarks that he wrote for Iqbal to Dr Kashfi and reffered to Prof Munawar's remarks:

> "On the basis of whatever Prof Munawar has so far written about Iqbal, it can be firmly asserted that a proclivity of vision, aesthetic sensuousness, literary standard of criticism, combing and seeking study of Islam and the Qur'an, modern thought and abounding analytical prowess have been plenteously bestowed upon him."[88]

Here, Dr Kashfi has bitterly criticized the critics who alienate Iqbal from his main source, the Qur'an, and dub him as an interpreter and propagandist of socialism because he advocates dynamic concept of life. Dr Kashfi writes:

[88] Dr Kashfi, *Man and Book (Adami awr kitab)*, p. 78.

> "The revolutionary humor of Islam and ignorance about traditions or their vested interests incite them say such things."[89]

To Dr Kashfi, poetry is the plant and flower of Islam. Poetry shows us the beauty of this flower in all its mystery and splendor. Poetry embodies and illustrates Islam's impressions by imagination, or images of the objects of which it treats, and other images brought in to throw light on those objects, in order that it may enjoy and impart the feeling of their truth in its utmost conviction and affluence. Dr Kashfi's concept of literature was annexed to the dynamic values of Islam. This concept mothered the literary training of new generation and prosperity of religious poetry, especially Na't. We pay our humble thanks to the most beneficent Lord that Na't literary activity has been echoing in Pakistan's literature for last three decades. Dr Kashfi headed the vanguards heralding the publications of Na't with probe into literary merits emboldening the novices in the world of modern Na't; rather he was the single critic engaged in the immaculate struggle of advancing the lined up Na't poets by means of his Na't concept in spreading out Na't literature.

None of the critics had yet initiated the linguistic and thematic deliberations and discussions about Na't for unveiling the literary beauty inherent in Na't structures, prefaces and reviews. This venture too was led by Dr Kashfi. With regard to understanding, admiring and analyzing Islamic literature, his literary evaluation is widely honored, Na't identification undisputed, knowledge of religious literature pursuable and his exalted taste for Na't is enviable. He wrote numerous prefaces, forewords, reviews and blurbs on a large number of Na't books and anthologies performing a common duty of all critics. The exhaustive list of these creations invites scholars to study it as a formal subject to

[89] Ibid, p. 77.

know and confirm his immense literary works that exist in these forms. Na't was his first preference. He wrote these views, reviews, forewords and prefaces with utmost seriousness, literary verve and serenity at a time when writing on Na't themes was considered putting one's honor and respect at stake.

This was pertinent with Dr Kashfi that he was trained in Na't appreciation and had undergone all phases of creative agony. His Na't work 'Nisbat' despite being a short account is a tremendous literary work, shining like a star on the horizon of Na't sentiment. Before Na't Rang was brought out, the identification of Na't literature, perception of Na't delicacy and the poetic aesthetics were on the backburner. Nor were circumstances conducive for venturing any vigorous endeavor to promote Na't criticism and research. At this juncture, Dr Kashfi unfurled the banner of criticism and advanced the movement for Modern Na't with great zeal, while the celebrities of Urdu literature and criticism could not partake in even appreciating the flourishing Na't creation. He patronized Na't Rang and did justice in promoting it. Even in ordeals, he kept writing, perpetuating his creative experience through time and enhanced it to sublimity. He would singularly wait for Na't Rang anxiously.

The articles that have been included in this book, written to pay homage to his insight in criticism and creative intellect, were created for various periodicals. One should be aware that impressionistic criticism is never a personal opinion alone; it is rather a manifestation of intellectual profundity, linguistic consciousness, creative intellect, thematic cognizance, subtleness and a time-tested penchant for literature. Dr Kashfi embraced the integrated methodology of impressionistic criticism for life, dedicated himself to Na't appreciation and evaluation and adhered to it resolutely. In view of this, those who felt pleased reading him and benefitted from his scholarly demeanor have comprehensively

jotted down their experience of visiting his poetry and prose. These writers are themselves exalted celebrities of Na't literature such as Prof Muhammad Iqbal Javed, Prof Akram Raza, Prof Shafqat Rizvi, Dr Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi, Dr Abu Sufiyan Islahi, Dr Shabbir Ahmed Qadri, Dr Qurra'tul Ain Tahira and Dr Aziz Ahsan. Their writings reflect on Dr Kashfi's literary stature and his inwardly sentiment for Na't, not comprehensively encompassing his entirety though. The staunch-believing literary minds owe him unveiling the beauty of his literary cognizance, and creative elegance. The pen of those who instill into their words the beauty of the physical and divine self of the Last of the Prophets 'enjoys the qualities of Musa's wand', says Allama Syed Suleman Nadwi.

X. *Mutaliat-e-Na't: Dr Aziz Ahsan*

I have already mentioned in the preceding pages at 10.3 how Sabih Rehmani learnt about Aziz Ahsan, followed him up, found and contacted him. Both of them then met, discussed the plan to set out on the Na't Rang journey and Aziz Ahsan gave him the word to dedicate himself to the cause of Na't's promotion and strive for creating a literary culture of Na't criticism and research.

In a conversation on the subject, Sabih disclosed to me that in 1994, both met in Mecca the Honored as they both were there on the eve of Hajj. In front of the Sacred House, near the Sacred Black Stone (Hajr-e-Aswad), they pledged to work together and bring out Na't Rang; and supplicated Almighty Allah to enable them to accomplish the task in a befitting manner and elevate the genre of Na't to its real literary, aesthetic and divine status through their plan for criticism and research in this field and spread it out at global level.

Dr Aziz Ahsan has given a colossal output in creating literature on Na't research and criticism and has been ceaselessly working for the cause since the commencement of

Na't Rang in 1995. Both are tirelessly toiling to meet the target of promoting Na't in all its dimensions and live on in the paradise of satisfaction and contentment called Na't Rang and Na't Research Center. They have crossed numerous milestones walking the talk, every time hearkening the echo in their hearts of the talk that transpired in front of the blessed door of the Sacred House. What a companionship and what a cause they are serving hand in hand with each other, seeking the pleasure of Allah and His beloved Messenger ﷺ! Dr Aziz Ahsan would not miss even a slight opportunity to write a review, preface, foreword, laudation, comments, flaps and brief notes required for various books, corners and pages of the Na't Rang to promote criticism culture.

Sabih Rehmani told me that he would study his writings with insight and find them of great significance for our enthusiastic readers. They would contain certain pertinent points that should not be left unattended and should appear in a collation of his writings. These specific write-ups would be ever remembered with regard to Na't criticism. Dr Aziz Ahsan made religious literature his fulcrum of cogent views and produced a larger number of books amidst analytical writings. Declaring his dissertations trend-setter, Sabih Rehmani wrote in the preface to this anthology:

> "This collation of Dr Aziz Ahsan's writings is being brought out on my aspiration and inspiration. Aziz had his reservations about it with reference to the literature of criticism on Hamd and Na't which was passing through a developmental phase. I understand that during this progressive period every word written with an insight of criticism must be taken on record. In this way, multiple trends will form up owing to day by day increasing taste for criticism, research, commentaries, reviews, analyses and observations. I firmly believe that writings produced with composure and enthusiasm would be

> of great benefit in enlightening the fields of intellectual activity. The future researchers and critics will be able to determine the paradigm of criticism and perspicacity along with finally shaping their creative framework."

The articles included in this compilation were not created according to a pre-planned project. However, we can consider them as a leading addition towards the study of Hamd and Na't because they contain all those scientific and literary values which we can expect from a responsible critic and an impartial observer.

These studies of Hamd and Na't have also brought this reality in the limelight that these sacred genres are not only affecting our literary milieu but have also become a part of our civilizational environment at individual as well as collective level. The impression Dr Aziz Ahsan created about his affinity and adherence to literature in general and religious literature in particular has been validated with the publication and write-up he has wrought. You will not find this anthology too any different from the paradigm of other disquisitions and publications.

16. Sabih's Brief

He writes:

I was fortunate; the veteran men of letters like Dr, Aziz Ahsan, Rasheed Warsi, Abu al-Khair Kashfi and Hafeez Taib from Punjab, initially came forward to form a team or a hard core of intellectuals strengthening me as the front man and guiding me through the all weather phenomena. This team of valiant experts of art and literature further expanded and the celebrities like Hafiz Ludhyanwi, Dr Riaz Majeed, Prof Iqbal Javed, Prof Akram Raza, Dr, Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi, Dr Shabbir Ahmad Qadri and several others constituted the vanguard of this literary Jihad. That turned me into a rock-solid combatant to conquer the citadel of literary criticism in the realm of Prophetic Na't.

When the Almighty Lord wills to confer strength and victory on His servant, He infuses into his bloodstream the force of an overwhelming passion and invigorates it with the requisite energies, competences, skills and know-hows as has transpired in my case. Mission is one thing but making it your life is a different concern. For me, it is respiration, i.e. coming to halt means breathing one's last. However, that is sheer blessing of Almighty Allah; not my doing.

I brought out Na't Rang in 1995. How it flourished? It attracted people, and they started reading the researches, scholarly articles and informative writings I would manage to collect and produce. Gradually, they developed a vision about the new aspects of Na't and the areas where we lacked. It was my utmost effort to reach the eminent writers in Pakistan and India to join and advance this venture. Then people from literary circles also turned to it and perceived the significance of Na't as a literary genre. I succeeded in getting Na't sessions included in the literary conferences held in Pakistan and

India. Allah blessed me with such an effective, productive and proactive team of scholars that we successfully continued marching on towards our goal. Thirty issues of Na't Rang have so far been brought out and it is considered a first rate journal and the Government of Pakistan has bestowed it Presidential Seerat Award twice. This is Allah's special favour that it is regarded as reference at international level. It has generated sizeable literary activity in various universities and has set a trend to take research work in the field of literary evaluation of Na't books and their authors. Na't Rang serves as a reliable source to provide relevant material for M. Phil and Ph.D. theses.

At this stage I felt that a Na't Research Center should be established to meet the requirements. In 2002, the center was set up so that the books needed for research work could also be produced and provided to the needy scholars. Since then, over a hundred books have been printed and published which include books on literary criticism, research works, indices, catalogues, biographies and memoires. The books authored by eminent writers of India and Pakistan also form part of this activity. This is the Word of Allah: "And We exalted for you your remembrance." The one who is engaged in promoting the remembrance of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ is, in fact, doing what Allah wants to do. And he who shoulders Allah's will, Allah takes his work in His hand, which then becomes his will. Allah has not left me with any deficiency in my life. I submit my humble gratitude to my Lord."

17. Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri's Views about Sabih Rehmani

17.1 Promotion of Na't literature and Na't Rang

Sabih Rehmani called on Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri when he visited Canada in May 2015. Reffering to this meeting, Shaykh-ul-Islam wrote on May 14, 2015 to appreciate Sabih Rehmani's conspicuous and unprecedented struggle for the promotion of modern Na't literature:

> "In the field of literary Na't, he (Sabih Rehmani) has become a respectable reference. Along with his unique Na't poetry, heart-touching Na't reciting and scientific evaluation of Na't literature, his enlightening stance on Na't criticism and research work has turned his representative book serial Na't Rang into a fascinating and captivating creative experience. Besides, looking at some of the books published by his Na't Research Center, I have perceived what standard of Na't research, criticism and learning he aspires to achieve and what way he is advancing towards realizing his objectives. Discerning this moving struggle, I deeply pray for him and his team."

17.2 Minhaj University Na't Chair

In his valuable statement about Sabih Rehmani, Shaykh-ul-Islam especially mentioned:

> "During the meeting, when he proposed to establish a Na't chair in the Minhaj Univerity Lahore (MUL),

> I felt he was reading out my heart. Assuring him of my full cooperation, I said that if Na't Chair was not to be established, MUL would lose its justification to exist because MQI message was only to promote Prophetic love."

Congratulating on the publication of 25th issue of Na't Rang, he said:

> "I resolutely assured him to establish the Na't Chair. I pray Allah Almighty enables me to translate my desire into reality and fervently wish that both Na't Research Center (Karachi) and MUL should mutually cooperate in their work."

17.3 Establishment of Na't Research Center and Hassan Na't Chair in MUL

This is heartening that, as proposed and followed up by Sabih Rehmani, Shaykh-ul-Islam established Hassan b. Thabit Na't Research Center at MUL which has been inaugurated and tasked to work for the promotion of research work and criticism on Na't. In this way, the Minhaj University Lahore has become the only university in the country that has established the Na't Research Center named after Hassan b. Thabit ﷺ and Hassan Na't Chair, which Sabih Rehmani so intensely and sincerely desired and for which, his eminence, Shaykh-ul-Islam wrote to him in May 2015 to assure that it would be established and set to work in cooperation with Sabih's Na't Research Center Karachi. The Hassan b. Thabit ﷺ Na't Research Center MUL will endeavour to collect maximum research books so that the students and scholars engaged in writing theses on various Na't subjects at BS, M.Phil. and PhD levels should be provided with sufficient reference books and essential study material.

A Hassan Na't Chair too has been established that will work under the center and some famous Na't poet or Na't

reciter will be appointed to work for the laid down objectives to promote and advance Na't studies and produce Na't literature. Sabih Rehmani has expressed his firm intention to provide all possible cooperation to this Research Center and Na't Chair established in the MUL. A great and enviable achievement!

18. Views of Critics on Sabih's Poetry[90]

18.1 The Path of Mercy— Dr Abu al-Khair Kashfi

Empowering poetic diction with religious thought and emotion is an arduous venture for which we need to look for some Hali and Iqbal. Except for Persian, whatever the language and literature, you will only find few who would infuse religion and spirituality into poetic expression. Acquiring religious ideas as your state of mind, a panacea for a restless heart and adopting it as your ideology is indeed fabulously unique if not miraculous. Today's Urdu Na't is soaring affluent with symbolism, similes, metaphors and allusive diction, inventing a new world of art. The Na't poet's journey in devotion is taking him from finite to infinite realm of spiritual aesthetics. When the path of literature becomes the path of mercy, you can unlock new vistas with the key of literary experience, and that may prove your aspiration's next step into the valleys of spiritual delights.

Sabih Rehmani has set off on this journey of the path of mercy. He is blessed with the euphoria of imagination and the openness of mind which cannot be obtained without a vigorous faith.

Writing Na't in the form of devotional lyric has brought the poet face to face with a creative ordeal. However, Sabih Rehmani has devised new poetic measures with his intense

[90] Sabih Rehmani ki Na'tia Sha'eri, Fikri w Tanqidi Tanazur— *Sabih Rehmani's Na't Poetry, an ideological and critical perspective,* compiled by Dr Shama' Feroze.

devotional love. He has supplied new meanings to comparatively longer "radeefs", which have enhanced continuity of expression and melody of connectivity. That has rendered his ghazel Na't an experiment in aesthetic innovation. His Na't poems are also permeated with a love-discomfort and calm combined. His love-disquiet generates from his devotion to and aspiration for the doorsteps of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ, while he derives calm from the affinity and connection with the Green Mausoleum. His holy name on the lips is all his rhyme, rhythm, melody and cadence and the infallible source of eternal pleasure that will keep his soul soothed and eased even on the Last Day.

18.2 Sabih's Na't: A Word of Supplication, Mushfiq Khawaja

One sublime feature of Iqbal's ideology is that it brought about a pleasant change in Urdu poetry with regard to Na't. The panegyric poetry did not only remain confined to expression of devotion; it rather proved an effective means to understand and bring home to others the intricacies and hard facts of life and universe. Conforming to Iqbal's ideology, some of the modern poets who have earned their recognition as Na't poets have attained to the station of foremost creative artists and not mere preeminent Na't poets. Sabih Rehmani stands out amongst them. What I have perceived and felt about him is my conviction that Na't poetry has proved for Sabih Rehmani a word of supplication. He has reached this station as a precautious young man which people only achieve after spending most of their lifetime with consistent diligence and strenuous and dedicated creative work.

18.3 A Beautiful Na't Creation, 'Aasi Karnali

> "If you want to see the youth of age and thought combined, see Sabih Rehmani and Jada-i-Rehmat."

Last time when Ghaus Mian visited me he was accompanied by a young man. I remained busy talking to Mian Sahib alone and did not turn towards the young man. Mian Sahib has an attractive personality blessed with Prophetic love; his conduct fully conforms to 'Uswah Hasanah'. Wherever he finds a writing having Beautiful Names (*Asma' al-husna*) of Muhammad ﷺ or the remembrance (*Zikr*) of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ he picks it up, kisses it, touches it with his eyes and commits it to his heart. To me, seeing him is a spiritual experience and sitting in his company is remaining with a friend of Allah. So I could not pay the young man due attention.

After quite some time, the young man gathered the courage to say: I also want to talk to you.

"Well." I replied half attentively. "I am Sabih Rehmani."

"May be!" I said in my heart.

"This is a collection of my Na't by the name *Jada-i-Rehmat*. I seek you to write something about it."

"The first collection of his Na't composition has come by the name *Mah-i-Tayba*." Mian Sahib said, introducing him.

"Well. I will see your manuscript and will write something if I feel moved." Then I was again lost with Ghaus Mian.

The fact is that we the elders, due to age factor, do not consider young poets and literary figures worth attention. In our view, poetry needs exercise and exercise needs mature age; therefore, the young poets are considered as novices or beginners and we forget them. One way of looking at it may also be a sense of self-degradation writing about youngsters.

Anyway, I read the *Jada-i-Rehmat* of Sabih Rehmani from A to Z and thereafter *Mah-e-Taybah* as well.

I felt ashamed for my attitude of inattentiveness towards him and tender my apology today; I am making an attempt to make good the loss by writing these lines.

"*Jada-i-Rehmat*" begins with Hamd. There are three Hamds and two Hamdiya hicos in it and thereafter twenty four Na'tiya ghazels. Seventeen Na'ts are in the form of restricted (*paband*) and free-verse (*azad*) poem structures and, at the end, there are ten Na'tiya hicos.

Sabih Rehmani has expressed his art experience in other forms as well along with the prevalent ghazel format. This diversity of poetic forms reflects on a poet's innovative taste. We are composing "Na't" in the form and style of ghazel since many centuries. An ode (*ghazel*) has its own style, internal atmosphere and peculiar requirements. Therefore, when we create a Na't in a ghazel form we generally stick to its stipulated constitution. The person praised in some ghazel is an allegorical beloved. We have a passion for the beloved. If Na't is to be created in ghazel form, we need to purify our passion the maximum, by avoiding praise of physical body of the beloved like praising hair (*zulf*), cheek (*rukhsar*) and panegyric (*qasida*) of eye (*chashm*) and lip (*lab*), etc. The open and hidden things relating to beauty (*husn*) remain with us. In addition, we perform the function and duty of stating and picturising the bodily beauties. When this form of ghazel becomes the axis of our "Na't", I regret to say that some poets fail to meet the requirements. I have Na'ts which may be called simple ghazels if words like 'Aqa' or 'Maula' are removed.

Sabih Rehmani and oversensitive poets like him might have thought to take up free-verse format avoiding ghazel's restraints. Observance of Radeef and Qafiya in ghazel requires a special system of thought and art. Generally, such subjects are taken in a ghazel that prove befitting for radeef

and penult syllables (*qawafi*) and specific ghazel themes may find expression. However, our opinion is not a maxim. Some poets of Na't who adopt ghazel form are masters of their art; instil their inner piety into their diction and elevated passions and sublimity of thought and art into poetic aesthetics.

Sabih Rehmani has maintained these good qualities despite leaving the requirements of *radeef* (the ending repeat words of second line of every verse) and *qawafi* (rhyming words or penult syllables with identical final sounds preceding *radeef*, like high and die in English poems; aana jaana, paana, etc. in Urdu) and adopting free verse maintained the essentials of poetic aesthetics (*shi'riyyat*). He knows that in our poetic tradition (*shi'ri riwayat*) a pleasing tune, poetic melody or cadence (*ghina'iyyat*) has enjoyed a special significance.

A selection of the beautiful words and their arrangement in the verse and the selection of metres/measures (*buhur*), and a beautiful balance between the shortness and length of different lines all jointly establish the musical system of a piece of poetry. For this, the poet keeps the beauty of the repeated rhyming word of a verse (*radeef*) and penult syllables (*qawafi*) among the lines in free verse format as well.

Sabih Rehmani has avoided a lacklustre experience despite composing a free verse and has provided all such things that adorn his creations with poetic and musical system.

The same beauty and grace is present in his hicos. He has composed in a short and beautiful melodious tone or rhythm (*mutrannam bahr*) following three-line poems and has filled them to the full with rhythm (*bahr*), idea (*khayal*), language (*zuban*) and expression (*bayan*).

Sabih Rehmani's style of saying "Na't" is fresh, lucid and innovative. He knows that if a thing is not said in one's own voice and accent, a poet cannot survive. The poetry is being composed for thousands of years. How much of new store is available of themes and subjects and multiplicity of topics? Hence it is the individuality of accent and the identity of voice

that can keep a poet alive in the history of literature. An intelligent and enlightened poet adds freshness and individuality of accent to the old things, fixes his place and ensures his survival.

Sabih Rehmani has maintained this attempt in ghazel, nazm, *qat'a* and hico forms to say the old things in new colour and new shade in different style. Hence he has consciously adopted new *radeefs* and has searched for such *qawafi* that may submerge in these *radeefs*.

Another quality of his style is to give new meanings to the words by inventing new phrases and depicting new images. Such inventions can only be made by a poet who possesses soundness of taste and insight and who is vigilant to the tradition of the language and expression and the possibilities of its future evolution.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is a mercy for all the worlds. Before his arrival, humankind was given to ignorance and misguidance; unaware of the Creator and ignorant of himself and the purpose of his creation. With the blessed arrival of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ man became aware of the Creator, of himself, his culture and civilization, acquired knowledge, learnt sciences, morality and dignity. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the master, leader and guide for humankind and the entire universe. To love and obey him is obligatory upon us. When our link with him weakens, we fall prey to trials. The whole Umma is in crisis. It is only through reviving our link with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that our afflictions will end. It is not Muslim Umma alone; rather the whole of humankind needs his guidance to restore world peace and human dignity.

"Na't" of Sabih Rehmani smells the sweet fragrance of Prophetic love and is enlightened with this passion of the revival of our link with the Messenger, the Merciful ﷺ. His style, themes, and aesthetic expression germinate from this love. He lives in spirituality and infuses it into the hearts of

his audience and readers through his melodious voice and rainbow of words.

18.4 Na't Poetry of Sabih Rehmani, Hafeez Taib

People must have taken it incredible when they saw an adolescent reciting Na't with spiritual hunger and took no time in performing his own Na't composition of the quality that would touch the strings of heart and play tunes of so deep a devotional love which only a spiritually ascendant soul could conceive, integrate into his inner depths, pluck stars of poetic diction from the galaxy of Prophetic love and present us an illumination feast of devotional poetry decked with brilliant thoughts and emotions. How could Sabih Rehmani, in his teens grow with such a fertile imagination, refined language facility, rise and fall of melodious tunes and measure that he would select for his poetic expression to demonstrate a dancing joy on his lips and tip of the pen at the same time. How did he get fostered and blessed with such a precise and perfect poetic diction?

خدا ہی جانے ہمیں کیا خبر کہ کب سے ہے
جو اُن کے ذکر کا رشتہ ہمارے لب سے ہے

"God knows, I know not, since when, His remembrance has embroidered my lips."

So Na't was infused in him before the start of his word-conscious life. The gift of humility was handed down to him by the unknown pious and their supplications bestowed upon him the creative impulse.

Humility is a valuable source that proves vital for a poetic experience and Sabih has been most fortunate to get a lion's share:

Our lowly position!

And Sabih; the Messenger's Exalted station!
Induce in our heart and liver,
A kind of stirring palpitation.

The inner quiver and tremor is not every one's lot, while sublime Na't poetry gushes out of this inner tremble. He says:

زباں کو مدحت کی آرزو ہے
لہو میں نغمے ہمک رہے ہیں

The tongue longing for praise,
And songs hopping in the blood.

His longings guarantee his Na't's sublimity, grandeur and glory spread all over his poetic works. But he feels an unquenchable thirst for the praise of the beloved Prophet:

قلم کی پیاس بجھتی ہی نہیں مدحِ محمد ﷺ میں

The pen's thirst to praise Muhammad ﷺ is not extinguished.

Everyone is not endowed with the stirring palpitation of heart and liver, while a sublime Na't is created out of it.

Sabih how to deliver panegyric?
Letters stammer on my lips

The love-laden Na't poetry by Sabih Rehmani is not detached from the time spirit he has been fed on. It is reflected in all his poetic experience. He aspires ecstatic presence and rapturous states fully lighting his diction. This aspiration finds frequent expression in his panegyrics.

About half of *Jada-i-Rehmat* is in ghazel style and rest of it consists of free verse and restricted Na'tiya poems. Both parts provide evidence that Sabih Rehmani is well versed in meeting the requisites of these formats. Moreover, he does not want to see Na't poetry lesser in rank and standard *ghazel* and *nazm* have attained. Thus he acquaints his poetic prowess, novelty

and innovation persistently adorning Na't with the styles and proclivities of modern age. He has also achieved a visible success in developing his own distinct individual language and accent.

The impacts of the Messengership of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the world history are the most important themes of Na't. It is the greatest trial of a poet of Na't to express these realities with poetic aesthetics. Sabih Rehmani has been granted perfection in making the mark.

Sabih Rehmani sees the Prophetic blessings spread from origination to eternity, and, with personal references, describes how the people are being benefited from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Na't of Sabih Rehmani is fully immersed in love and ecstasy but not alien to the spirit of the contemporary age. In the poem part, the spirit of the contemporary age is much conspicuous while communicative indications of it are available in *ghazel* Na'ts.

Longing for ecstatic attendance and award of audience in the exalted court of Allah's Messenger ﷺ are great topics of Na't poetry. Sabih Rehmani also portrays it with charisma.

The canvass of poems is comparatively vast encompassing tribulations facing the Umma. Mercy has been prayed for with reference to injustices and oppression perpetrated by Israel in al-Aqsa Mosque, Palestine and Occupied Kashmir. Hypocrisy among the Muslim Umma too has been professed. An echo of the deplorable conditions of humankind begs for mercy; at places these pangs are quite evident.

18.5 Poet of Many Dimensions, Dr Syed Rafi'uddin Ashfaq (Nagpur, India)

"Love of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is the first condition of faith and the Na't of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is the expression of the same passion. Fortunate are those who belong to this brotherhood and live in the environment that echoes with the

Prophetic ﷺ love and is filled with the fragrance of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ remembrance. Sabih Rehmani also comes from the same fraternity who have devoted their poetic potential to Na't poetry. He belongs to that young generation in the world of Na't who should be called the hope of the future. I had a chance to hear his composition in a Na't Musha'era held in Karachi. There is no doubt about it that as sublime poetry has magic effect, its recitation with melody and cadence too is charismatic. The devotional style Sabih Rehmani adopted to present his Na't composition filled the hearts of the audience with love of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Whatever Sabih Rehmani has accomplished is much. His sincerity, zeal and zest is the best way forward. His poetic thought, looking for new styles, pleasant diction and captivating phrases, similes and metaphors to adorn his poetry is such an activity which is no less than an act of worship. It is a self-purification formula. Innovative similes and metaphors in his Na't compositions display his sound taste and ability to compose excellent poetic verse.

The devotion, struggle for the achievement of the objective, sincerity and cultural refinement he is bestowed upon are taking him along towards a bright future. Time is not far when he will shine like a full moon on the horizon of Na't poetry.

18.6 Sabih Rehmani—The Tree of Trees, Dr Riaz Majeed

Dr Riaz Majeed has observed that Sabih Rehmani is the tree of trees of the Na't Paradise. A living legend of the contemporary Na't narrative, a refined editor of discourses, dissertations and treatises on Na't, acquiring them from creative brains of the time, and an institution in his own self, he has raised the Na't genre to an exalted status in sublime literature. It will be received with surprise if someone exists to make such a claim.

Dr Riaz Majeed says he borrowed the expression 'tree of trees' from Martin Lings to describe Sabih's role in the world of Na't; he has earned it. The oldest and the eldest one of the trees in an orchard is a witness to the mushrooms of vegetation around, of different age groups, fostering weathers, birds singing their lyrics and the old banyan—the tree of trees—enjoying the spectacle, wishing them many springs, fragrant breezes, blossoms and dancing 'daffodils'.

This analogy well explains the mindset of this banyan tree when he engages himself in collating the branches, leaves and flowers of other trees, puts them together and develops an enormous and brilliant pageantry of historical and critical views on a given subject. This highly creative and imaginative exercise of collecting the topmost works and anthologizing them into a compilation serves multiple creative and literary purposes. We have already seen in the preceding section that the "tree of trees" of Na't literature has anthologized the branches, leaves and fruits of some trees that have born delicious, nutritious and timeless fruits, greenery and their arterial supply lines of food and energy to serve to his guests the banquet called Na't Rang. What an analogy Dr Riaz Majeed has employed to describe our Na't revolutionary legend, Sabih Rehmani![91]

The contemporary Na't narrative has by now completed four decades. The last decade of the preceding century proved especially fertile to accelerate its growth. The creative work on research, criticism, publication explosion and the evolution in semantics, contents and forms stretched beyond expectations in launching a revolution in the world of Na't, and it was not less than a miracle that Na't came to be considered a genuine literary genre of Urdu poetry at universal level. This is history and a great journey. The Na't poets, critics, researchers, compilers, editors, commentators,

[91] Sabih Rehmani's Na't Poetry, p. 87.

anchors, and other contributors to this development at various levels got engaged in this struggle and the man behind the gun who executed the work plan and kept the strings of the development in his hand was a young man not even aging 30 years who came to the fore, imagined, planned, organized coordinated, directed, controlled and marched on to reach the destination and this young man was none other than Sabih Rehmani.

He commenced his struggle bringing out Na't Rang, a book serial journal, and led everyone towards the goal through his goal-setting and direction setting editorials. That is how, though quite young, he became a banyan, a tree of trees. Sit near him and feel his shade—the shade of Na't, its research, critical analyses, its structural vision, its literary status and the new yardstick ladder that has taken it far ahead of what it was 40 years before. Na't is now not for the sake of Na't, a Na't for general expression of panegyric feelings of a common man. It has taken a leap and acquired a status of literary genre, a piece of poetic literature wrought by skill and experience, acquiring a permanent status of creative literary art, and is treading the path of evolution to a superior aesthetic station. It has set a new tradition, an artistic extension of a century old tradition of Na't poetry travelling from Mohsin Kakorvi and Ameer Minai down to Iqbal and scores of other poets reaching the last decade of the preceding century, whence it has taken a new turn and has earned a fresh recognition as pure literature.

What happened then in the last decade of twentieth century? The creative minds had started liberating from a conventional posture producing new contents and forms of panegyrics. However, they were only individualistic disorganized attempts. Na't was overwhelmingly understood as mere religious poetry. Na't books were not included by the government institutions in the list of prize winning works by poets. Yet people like Jamil Jalibi, Dr Riaz Majeed and other

scholars raised a voice to abandon the practice and give Na't books what was their due. That was the time when circumstances took such a turn that Sabih Rehmani, a youth, conceived the revolutionary advancement of devotional poetry by dedicating himself to make it morph into a genre of Urdu literature through developing a system of research and criticism of Na't creative experience as a piece of Urdu literature. He unfurled the banner of establishing new world of Na't and to realize this objective, he brought out 'Na't Rang journal book serial to promote the cause of Na't evolution and revolution. Highly fortunate are those who joined him in the struggle at that early stage and agreed with Sabih that Na't can win its literary status through undergoing literary process of evaluation according to the yardsticks devised for other genres of Urdu literature. A literary status can only be attained by measuring up to literary principles of criticism and meeting its demands: literature's socio-cultural thoughts, intellectual contents, aesthetic standards, semantic refinement, moral excellence and proprieties for the exalted Messenger of Allah ﷺ, allusive poetic diction and the art of presenting idea, thoughts, emotions, feelings and sensuousness that renders aesthetic expressions a cultivation of semantic nuances. Na't Rang strived to spread and expand this vision which made the study and evaluation of Na't literature a vast, regularized, reliable and enlightening critical, evaluative and aesthetic experience. The new tradition of Urdu literature was thus established to promote panegyrics and devotional poetry. Na't Rang thus won a matchless and historic victory.

His workload as editor Na't Rang kept him from constant and regular creative experience. The pursuit of this colossal objective would only disallow him a sporadic poetic composition. Conquering the Himalaya of getting recognized Na't as a genre of Urdu literature by pure literary world put toilsome demands on him. Contacting the Na't scholars in

India and Pakistan, convincing them to join him on this front, making them write research papers on panegyrics by Ghalib, Mohsin, Amir Minai, Hali, Iqbal investigating their literary worth and treatises on Na't criticism compatible with the literature of Urdu criticism in vogue and also liaison with the intellectuals of Urdu literature apprising them of his struggle and objective to achieve was such a huge mission that he spent all his time in constituting his team, assigning them tasks and following up his fight in all directions left with him only a little while to sit, feel inward commotion for Na't and enjoy creative moments. He set for himself a procedure, a course of action and a paradigm that would take him to the destination. The writers who joined him gave a direction to intellectual and literary matters and issues of Na't through their dissertations. Now it was the responsibility of Na't poets to produce Na't bearing creative feature that would fulfil the laid down literary standards, to keep in view innovative and modern style of expression being pursued by poets producing sublime poetry and above all to observe the binding stipulation of proprieties, refined diction, befitting standards of phraseology and pleasing heart notes while glorifying the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Sabih Rehmani kept in view all these aspects while composing his Na't. The feature that dominates his panegyrics is his lowliness and humility which forms part of our faith while submitting to the exalted Prophet of Allah ﷺ. You do not even breathe heavily while invoking on him salutation, nor should you look up; lowering your eyes and making even your tears flow respectfully washing your face gently while bowing before him. He reflected this posture in his poetic verses and made it a prominent feature of his versification. Even while reciting Na't, Sabih is spiritually lost and his melodious voice touches the deepest cords of heart and soul, showering immense spiritual ecstasy upon the audience.

Although he is a popular and prominent Na't reciter and has to strike the receptivity of audience with emotional notes of his melodious voice, he maintains his discipline of keeping himself low and reverent while reciting Na't and does not encroach upon limits. He attracts the audience with his lucidity and emotional sincerity in addition to his overwhelming Prophetic love ﷺ.

کوئی مثل مصطفیٰؐ کا کبھی تھا نہ ہے نہ ہو گا
کسی اور کا یہ رتبہ کبھی تھا نہ ہے نہ ہو گا

"The like of Mustafa was never to be, nor is and never shall be,
Such an exalted station of someone was never to be, nor is and never shall be."

Sabih has taken up a long measure, dividing it into two segments, and decked with regular line ending slogan has created a world of emotional linking up with the Holy Prophet ﷺ putting all the three classes of time, past, present and future, into it in a simple easy, direct style but it speaks volumes about the whole history of humankind. Every verse of this Na't contains a unique subject and presents a variety of poetic characteristics with high quality aestheticism. Sabih Rehmani employs this technique in all his panegyrics which brings him name and fame.

Had he not been overworked with his immense responsibility of Na't Rang and Na't Research Center, he would have created several volumes of his devotional poetry by now, never to rise in time as a Tree of Trees.

18.7 Aesthetic Expression of Prophetic Love, Dr Aziz Ahsan

A poetic verse is a means of aesthetic expression of emotions. When a word attains harmony with sentiment and inner

feeling and the expression smells rosy fragrance of aesthetic experience, the poet succeeds in translating his sensuous feeling into words. A poetic verse devoid of this inspired state can be called a verse owing to its visible form but, in fact, it is a body without a soul.

The Arabs would call a piece of prose poetic that contained reflection of aesthetic feeling. Their poetic perception would call anything beautifully expressed and communicatively rich a piece of poetry. The Muslims by virtue of recitation of the Qur'an have the beauty of expression inherent in their system of thought and language. That is why the initial specimens of Arabic Na't had truth and beauty of expression intermingled.

When Islamic teachings changed the socio-cultural psyche in non-Arab world and the Prophetic love formed the basis of their faith, the creative minds started adorning the Prophetic love in poetic words. However, most of the poets could not make the mark in attainting sublimity of aesthetic expression due to deficient language facility and lacking in sound conception of truths.

When Na't debuted in Urdu, the Na't poetry could not come up to the mark in achieving the aesthetic standards because of the poets' lack of expertise and the Urdu language being yet tender in age. Only a negligible number of poets could attend to the aesthetic aspect in an artistic manner of which Mohsin Kakorvi is one eminent name. He is an exception to the prevailing morbid output.

In modern times, however, some gifted poets did attain perfection in producing standard aesthetics such as Abdul Aziz Khalid, Hafeez Taib, Aasi Karnali, Muzaffar Warsi, Hanif As'adi, Hafiz Ludhyanwi, Naeem Siddiqui, Amber Bahraichi and Riaz Hussain Chaudhry.

There is a list of brilliant poets who have produced Na't with aesthetic verve, consciousness of the sanctity of the panegyric subject and semantically sublime diction. Sabih

Rehmani is a prominent name amongst the specially gifted lot. One only feels amazed while reading his panegyrics with the aesthetic handling of devotional heart throbs, the beauty of expression and the expression of beauty. What adds to this astonishment is his small age and big art of creative expression. To vent the depth of his thought and feelings, making the expression tangible with its sensuous quality, he coins such similes and metaphors and devises word arrangements which enhances readers' and his own perceptivity of his spiritual imagery. One feels as if Sabih has explored some unique poetics that gives him a feel of the scenes and pictorial world Sabih takes him in. When a poet experiences sensuous expression in creative process and blends his sensuous state of creativity with an empiric substance, he presents to our eyes and ears a sensuous reality prettified with language cosmetics. That amounts to discovering a new poetics that plays mesmersing tunes on the strings of hearts. That is Sabih's art of Na't poetry, the aesthetic expression of Prophetic ﷺ love.

18.8 A Na't Poet, Affluent with Confidence and Humility, Dr Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi

The poetic aesthetics or the pleasures of poetic imagination and expression premise the beauty of artistic language on both form and content. Contents are the soul that infuses life into words, which breathe with semantic allure. Words and meanings fabricated with the silk of feelings and ideas weave what we call a verse. The sounds and rhythms affected with stress and intonation forms a piece of poetic art. In truth, it is feelings and perception carved into prosodic expressions that generate poetic aesthetics. The more the expression is true to reality, the more it becomes affective on audition. The composition of metrical rhythm, a collection of phrases,

similes and metaphors immersed in emotive ebb and flow takes the name 'poetry'. A climax of affect and effect germinate from the truth of the emotion that illumines a verse in and out. Na't, a genre of poetry, is loaded with the intensity and truth of emotion, thus making it all the more affective, entrancing and ecstatic; hence Na't a far superior poetic creation. Emotionality and religiosity embrace the art of expression together, thus fascinating hearts of readers and audience into a state of aesthetic pleasure.

Na't or divine poetry of love and veneration of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the illumining exposure of the emotions of Prophetic love and reverence through words that become see-through owing to master strokes of the Na't poet's art of poetic expression—symbols, similes, metaphors, religious allusions, pictorial images, illustrative narrations and literary phraseology. When a panegyric poet succeeds in portraying the beloved Prophet's divine attributes in poetic style, he feels set alight inside and a divine delight overwhelms him, bowing in devotion. He, as if attired in light and fragrance, finds himself in the realm of divinity. Na't, therefore, is not mere a poetic genre, it is rather a measure of the veracity and integrity of faith. As the subject of Na't is the sacred personage of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his attributes, blessings, generosity, compassion, mercy and clemency, a slight slip from the proprieties to be observed in revering, admiring, obeying and serving him as his love-charged slave, will render our deeds null and void even without our awareness. It is, therefore, like walking on the edge of sword. A Na't poet who observes all caution and care and remains charged with due devotion and love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ becomes commensurately exalted in grades and is rewarded by Almighty Allah and His beloved Messenger ﷺ with blessings and favors not yet known. It is Allah's special favor bestowed upon a soul to enable him to get into the process of producing Na't, work for its cause, spread its

awareness, create a world of Na't and refine its aesthetics beyond the possibilities known to poetic beauticians. This becomes atonement for our decay and fall and relieves the Muslim community of its decline. History has proved it in all eras.

The doors of Na't Paradise were opened to Sabih Rehmani even in tender age. The bliss of avidity for panegyrics was conferred on him in his teens—not an age of command of poetic linguistics, mature literary taste, affective cognizance, thought, imagery, fluency, novelty, freshness, individuality and emotional trueness and intensity that he employed and revealed in his poetic creations—a bliss that came down upon him from the realm divine! And he was treading the "Path of Mercy" with a vital firmness of faith just rare in the youths of his adolescent days. Certainly a juvenile Na't poet, Sabih had been especially crowned with a poetic consciousness, reflecting effulgence of an embodiment of divine beauty, marvel and splendor. All these provided him with an unprecedented confidence. He wrote:

It's the fragrance of holy name surging my lips,
The name of colossal benefit in both the worlds.

His calyx is full of superior names but this name, in particular, is supreme:

All his beautiful names,
Shining in my 'self' expanse.

Owing to that:

The calyx of my art and thought is,
Filled with the fortune of Na't.

He is also very clear and sure that this fortune is a charity granted to him:

It's the Prophet's charity in my cup of art,
My work is all his blessings A to Zee.

This fortune charity has been instilled into his soul; Na't therefore, comes from within him:

Venerating the beloved Prophet is,
A call of my inner self.

This requisite is not a social demand, nor any obligation of time, nor any exercise in producing art; rather, it is Sabih's life-brook streaming since time unknown:

God knows, I know not, since when,
His reverence has embroidered my lips.

He confesses he is a humble being and claiming to be a Na't poet is far beyond him. However, a heart-throb does vibrate inside him which too is beyond any constraint.

Na't poetry is far beyond Sabih,
Yet can't he bridle the inside melody.

Confidence and humility flow in opposite direction. However, Sabih's literary consciousness and inner consistency have combined these two waves of vitality. The glowing awareness of the Prophet's exalted and resplendent highness and sworn fealty to the generous giving away of largesse from the blessed doorsteps of his Mausoleum imbue him with confidence and assurance while the creative awareness of the subtleties of praise poetry and confession of incapacity enrobes him in modesty and humility. He knows his honor is picking at the left over pieces at the serviette in the divine court of the chief of universe, the beloved of his Creator and extolled by the entire creation; peerless, incomparable, matchless and unequaled ﷺ. Yet if any presumption emerges, his faith braves and rumbles:

If any whim points to a peer,
His faith roars: never was, is or will be any.

So Na't is a matter of faith with Sabih; he is for Na't alone. The affinity with the praise poetry of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ is the be all and the end all of what he thinks, says and writes:

The last word I speak and the last I write, I yearn,
Should be your holy name, my master.

People have forgotten the center of gravity of their existence, the love and devotion for the Last Prophet ﷺ. The humanity has failed to protect its dignity. Sabih believes that panacea to remove all the hardships and solve all the issues the community is facing is only establishing a firm contact of love and devotion with the holy Prophet ﷺ. Such a contact will provide shelter and care in the blazing and raging desert of present day life. Sabih feels to the inner depths of his heart how ruthlessly human life is being tortured, yet he has an overwhelming belief in the welfare charity given from the doorsteps of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ. That makes him bang out the glad tidings time and again to the exhausted caravans who have lost the right path.

The source of calm in the life-desert ablaze,
Remember him, 'nd rosy longings of his way.
A panacea for all tribulations, swift,
Think of Muhammad's ﷺ life style complete.

Modern man is in siege of hatred, wilderness and violence. The tyrannous forces are ruling over humans all around. Fear and awe has overpowered incapacitated indigent people and bitterness, rudeness and arrogance prevails. The entire milieu is a collection of agitating stimuli that can set the globe ablaze not known how quickly and when. Yet there is a cure-all remedy which can shed light everywhere to eliminate the darkness of injustice, brutality, hatred, intolerance, extremism and terrorism:

اس عہدِ جبر میں ہر سو محبت کی اذاں گونجے
ہمیں ایسی دعا پھر اے حبیبِ کبریا دے دو

The love call should boom in the era of oppression,
O Beloved of Almighty, we again seek your supplication.

This call and supplication changed the course of time in the past as well. It is going to serve as a panacea even now.

نورِ سرکارِ دو عالم کو پکارا میں نے
جب اندھیروں کے قدم وادیٔ جاں تک پہنچے

I called out the light of the master of both the worlds,
Whenever darkness advanced towards me.

Sabih Rehmani is an ever-living soul, holding firmly his connection and intermediation to Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ, crawling and moving towards his glow of light taking humble short steps getting under the shower of the rays of his effulgence, sure and confident of the light of his faith lighting his path, breathing with the feeling that his modesty and humbleness will provide him full support in moving on and on.

صبیح ان کی ثنا اور تو کہ جیسے برف کی کشتی
کرے سورج کی جانب طے سفر آہستہ آہستہ

Sabih, the like of a snow-boat, and 'his praise',
Sailing towards the sun, gently and slowly.

This is his "Path to Mercy" and his journey in goodness and devotion. May his journey continue forever!

18.9 Sabih's Na't Experience, Shams ur-Rahman Farooqi

What Sabih's Na't semantics conspicuously denote is his true love for Allah's Messenger ﷺ and his ability to shape it into

poetic expression. His creative experience stands aloof from already chewed up stuff and does not feel any proclivity for an apparently fascinating linguistics. He well understands what Na't demands, and instead of consciously striving for novelty, he cares for love-warmth in what he says.

Introduction of new topics in glorification and panegyrics is a hard task but versifying what has already been wrought in one's individual aesthetic creation too is a great experience in creative art. Longing for eyeing the beauty and yearning for ecstatic selflessness is everyone's dream but nobody will express it like Sabih:

The anguish for travel baggage wore away,
In reverie towards Tayba treading.
The tongue loses speech in Medina,
The welling eye, keeps quietly calling.

That is Sabih's style. Entreating like a stuttering child time and again bowing at the doorsteps of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ is far affective compared to using a thousand expressions for the Prophet's holy sight. That is his style:

Exalted love, nothing remains hard if you will,
To a few steps this distance may confine;
Exalted love, your consideration alone soothes me,
Exalted love, I'll triumph when you enjoin.

Proving his "isness" is not his problem; his endeavor is to manifest his non-existence. All he longs for is the holy name frolicking on his lips—a far great blessing for him in the whole world.

Exalted love, I long for your blessed name,
The last word I utter, the last word I pen.

18.10 Review, Sehar Ansari

"T.S. Eliot has prescribed a recipe of consciousness and responsibility for every such poet who wants to remain a poet even after he attains the age of 25 years." Perhaps while

determining this age limit, it might be in the mind of Eliot that until reaching this age, generally the wave and whim of heart and soul keep the poet restricted and inclined to a few subjects full of peculiar passions. The rising young poet Sabih Rehmani before crossing that age limit, and even after having crossed it, earned a superior Na't poetry as his identity. There is no doubt in it that his engagement with the Na't composition is worthy of all appreciation. *Mah-e-Taybah* was his first collection of Na't and *Jada-i-Rehmat* the second one. Studying two of his collections, his evolution and future can be envisaged.

The rhyming words of his Na'ts possess their own magnificence and strike our minds at cognitive as well as affective levels. The quality of rhyme and rhythms in his Na't leaves the audience spell-bound. They feel absorbed and attached to him, with their hearts inscribed with the lines of his captivating poetry. He, along with the prevalent style of ghazel, has adopted sonnet, free verse and Japanese poetic genre 'hico' for his Na't compositions. Looking at the vastness and delicacy of Na't, it is no less a bliss for a young poet to reach the extent of possibilities.

The most important aspect of his Na't life, however, is bringing out a book serial of Na't Rang that has revolutionized the modern Na't; we can say he has created a new world of Na't. All the issues of this journal are wisdom packages of Na't literature bound to generate Na't identification through Na't criticism and research work for which he has established Na't Research Center. He has produced a huge number of reference books and facilitated the scholars as well as the students to advance the cause of Na't poetry, its criticism and research. A large number of students doing M Phil and PhD are benefitting from his colossal output and the literature is spread around in several academic institutions especially universities in country and abroad. His special endeavour is reviving the Urdu Na't

tradition through a renaissance activity of producing works on Mirza Ghalib, Mohsin Kakorvi, Ameer Minai, Ahmad Raza Khan and Iqbal. I pray for his good health and long life and many more brilliant triumphs in spreading Na't revolution around the globe.

18.11 The Rose of Paradise, Jazib Qureshi

In the last decade of 20th century, of the new voices of Na't poetry that have come to the fore, the voice of Sabih Rehmani is a representative voice. It is representative for the reason that he has expressed the truth, manifested interest in Na't poetry and promoted the art of Na't to such an extent and with such an innovation which is not noticed among his contemporaries. He has engaged himself in a unique struggle to earn for Na't its true literary position.

Sabih Rehmani is both a melodizer and a composer of Na't. In my view, there is no incompatibility between both these positions. Rather both the ways lead to the love and attachment for the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Na't melodizer may help the Na't poet in selecting the diction which proves more expressive and inspiring. That is what we observe in Sabih Rehmani's Na't poetry. Therefore, both the voice of Sabih Rehmani and his Na't poetry have jointly become strong, distinct and unique.

From *Mah-e-Taybah* to *Jada-i-Rehmat* his poetic expression buds from the aesthetic sensitivity which is rooted in his intense avidity to keep himself attached to the divine personage of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. He fervently seeks to behold the beautiful countenance of Allah's beloved Messenger ﷺ whose sight illumines the entire existence of the slave with heavenly brightness. This blessed aspiration has given him a progressive Na't style. Many phrases, metaphors and symbols appear in his Na't composition with fresh aesthetic shades which adorns his aesthetic experience with

evergreen expressions stemming from his ardent love for the Prophet ﷺ.

He feels strongly connected with Busiri, Jami, and Hassan. The feeling of such connectivity signifies the strength and vitality of creative sentiments expressed in love-loaded diction and divinity of figurative style. That validates significance of his creative passion. His fresh Na't poetry reflects his potential to present his expression more beautifully adding to it originality and novelty. The twenty first century is his century, for his sublime poetry has won him individuality and classic standing as a Na't poet.

18.12 The Yardsticks of Modern Na't Criticism, Dr Nasir Abbas Nayyar

An overview of Sabih Rehmani's pursuits reveals an amalgamation of aesthetic perception and erudition. The creation of neo-aesthetic perception of Na't and interpretation and understanding of Na't in fresh perspectives and from new angles are of his significant well-defined objectives. He has played a dynamic and prudent role in keeping Na't activity persistently live on creative and critical levels.

People of different tastes and visions have written about Sabih's Na't. They include classic critics of literature and a few searchers who have worked on Na't. This diversity, however, has not reflected the true modern Na't criticism. Our scholars of Na't poetics have only displayed a limited view of Na't and its artistic aesthetics. Na't is not merely a religious and devotional expression of panegyric emotions; it is also a regular genre of Urdu poetry. The critical paradigm our critics follow only comprises a repetition of a few points.

These evaluations do highlight some of Sabih's artistic and topical distinctions. We can see where the critics have surveyed the text of his devotional expression out of their religious fervor and where they have shown their erudition

about Na't poetics. When they touch it as a religious encomium, they seem seeking justification of their apathy towards a heavy responsibility of its artistic and literary analysis and exposition. Evaluation of its aesthetic aspects and semantic depths too becomes conspicuous if taken up, but the bitter reality stands out that Na't criticism is yet in a juvenile phase. This attitude in its genetics refers to the concept that criticism is nothing more than distinguishing right from wrong, appealing quality of the use of word or its inadequate if not awkward employment, and conformity to tradition or a modernistic endeavor. Articles assessing in this way the poetic experiment of a panegyric consists only of repetition of these few points: a word is used adequately, melody is captivating, metrical composition and the measure of the lines used by the poet especially the regular unchangeable ending phrases of the verses and penult syllables or the riming words that add cadence and aesthetic value and the use of similes and metaphors are employed. The poet has expressed traditional love and devotion and proprieties are observed in venting fervent devotional love. That is all about 'literary criticism' of Na't poetry in vogue.

When we see to it from a literary standpoint, these stereotyped yardsticks applied to investigate its quality only leave us in a blind alley—a course of action that leads nowhere. The poetic diction used in Na't, like the literary language employed in other genres of poetry, keeps the door to semantic tourism open. Visiting the linguistic attractions and delighting sights in the text take us to vast stretches of meanings spanning global. Poetic diction, as a matter of principle, treasures vastness of meanings. It utters less than its reticence packed with probabilities of interpretations from several angles. Its quietness echoes with entrancing meanings. No literary text is alienated from its externality. Words refer back to the socio-cultural milieu they sprout from. The readers and the audience perceive, understand and sense their

implied connotations, nuances and sensuous undercurrents due to their tangible linguistic blend with the same milieu. The Na't text uses the same diction, here charged with religiosity and sacred affinities with the signs of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Having its roots in the same social, moral and intellectual environment with its peculiar aesthetics, its semantic quality becomes transcendental, infused with spirituality. It neither expresses nor communicates in void. Laden with potential multilayered semantic verve, it affects our whole organism: skin, eyes, ears, locomotor rhythm, heart, liver, respiratory system and blood circulation. Its meanings thus know no limits.

Every text, sacrosanct or secular, maintains its originality, while its expositions do persistently alter. In origin, interpretation of the sacred text is an activity of human psyche, which is not a non-living entity; it interacts with other psychic forms and receives and stimulates effects. Like a butterfly, it acclimatizes and gets acclimatized with the environment. The new perception and understanding exercises its influence over all disciplines of knowledge, arts and activities. All new developments in all sciences exercise their influence over human understanding and perception. That is how interpretations of a text keep undergoing variant changes. Human understanding is the sphere where interaction between the text and time transpires in the form of interpretations by ever-changing comprehension of the text. The literary criticism of Na't inquires into these semantic dimensions and their effects stamped on individual and collective psyche in addition to the experiments in poetic diction by the Na't poet towards enhancement of its aesthetic, artistic, intellectual and semantic value.

18.13 Mubeen Mirza on Na't Criticism

Roland Barthes found three layers of meaning hiding in mass media, i.e. denotation, connotation, and myth, which shape

and reshape readers' ideology and persuade them to accept the ideology of the middle class. ... Consequently, Roland Barthes was really meaning-oriented or meaning-centrist in his cultural semiotic thought.

General observation of life bears testimony that the progressive inquisition by people who work in multiple directions simultaneously in the creative, aesthetic, critical and intellectual domains does not advance beyond certain level. When the quintessence of creativity undergoes sequential divide, its work potential attenuates. Here vital force principle applies. No frame work can be eventually concluded for the manifestations of vital force. In like manner, in humans, expressive potentialities too cannot be tailored or stipulated to any environs. They can take any style, form or shape. It depends upon the voltage of emotion flowing from the potential grid of expression. Far more significant is the dam generating and controlling the emotion reservoir and how deeply embedded is the stimulus in the person's strata of the inner self. Thoughts or deeds, one's yield stems from the nucleus, the dynamic power that affirms its isness at all levels of expression and activity. Its proactivity and effectiveness is proved at all the stages of its progression, from initiation to the apex of accomplishments. This nucleus or the emotion-stimulus designs, manifests and expands the contours of a poet's world of aesthetic experience.

The fountainhead or the stimulus of Na't poet like Sabih Rehmani is the divine love of the beloved Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It rouses commotion in his creative waters, molds and disciplines his ideas and thoughts and matures them into expression and articulation.

However, the literary, aesthetic and intellectual perception about this sublime genre of poetic art was neglected owing to the religious character of the stimulus, which was regarded as the be all and end all of a literary and intellectual paradigm. A complacent attitude towards an excellent aesthetic

experience brought about stagnation in intellectual and semantic inquiries into the Na't poetics. Here, the literary standards were considered inapplicable and Na't literature was deprived of its basic rights that were its due as an aesthetic experience. According to "A History of Modern Criticism" by Rene Wellek, the critical study of devotional poetry must be subjected to the literary and linguistic principles devised for other literary genres. The indifferent stance towards panegyrics, therefore, merits rejection."

Our known literary critics had no religious inclination and some of them rather had a bias against religion. Working on aesthetic and critical study of various genres of literature, they only disregarded the glorification and Na't literature and established this posture as a genuine position towards panegyrics.

In the contemporary literary perspective, a reader with an average understanding of literature can become a critic with the available tools. The principles of literary criticism, though old or obsolete, exist to apply and evaluate a piece of literature. On the contrary, the one who tends to evaluate a panegyric piece of work would not find any yardsticks to measure its dimensions. He is required to create certain viewpoints to assess its aesthetics, poetics and cultural, social and historical perspective besides developing a pattern of his treatise. A critic well-versed with the central idea of Na't and its human, aesthetic, ethical, cultural, intellectual and cosmic semantics can only dare attempt such a study. He also needs to be aware of the modes, manners and styles of literary expression and experience and their social genetic factors. A critic of average literary understanding can only invite an ordeal if he attempts.

18.14 Civilizing and Embellishing of Cultural Elements in Sabih's Poetic Works (A Structural Study), Kashif Irfan

French literary theorist, essayist, philosopher, critic, and semiotician, Roland Barthe's ideas explored a diverse range of fields and he influenced the development of many schools of theory, including structuralism, semiotics, social theory, design theory, anthropology and post-structuralism. On literary style, he writes:

> "The literary metaphor can be resumed, again with Barthes: If up until now we have looked at the text as a species of fruit with a kernel (an apricot, for example), the flesh being the form and the pit being the content, it would be better to see it as an onion, a construction of layers (or levels, or systems) whose body contains, finally, no heart, no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its own envelopes -- which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces."[92] (Barthes, 1971)

Sabih Rehmani brought out his first Na't poetic work "*Mah-e-Taybah*" in 1989 and second "*Jada-e-Rehmat*" in 1993, while his third collection of panegyrics "*Sarkar ke Qadmon me*" saw the daylight in 2002. If a creative work is regarded a swarm of layers upon layers, "*Mah-e-Taybah*" comprises three layers. Here the civilizing and embellishing of his poetic experience conducts us to a mirror house of glorification and panegyric experience where diverse surfaces of aesthetics create a new world of radiating lights through an

[92] Barthes, R. (1971) Style and its image, in *Literary Style: A Symposium*, pp. 3–15.

affluent reflection. In the interior of this mirror house the light of Muhammad ﷺ stands central to all links, while the lamps of perceptivity, emotionality and ideology charge the entirety of diction with divine effulgence, making the sun of art dawn in the exterior.

The scenes that dazzle our sight comprise affinity with the comforting and blissful Medina soil, expecting to reach the Prophet's Mausoleum, and the firework of the discomfort of love illumining these moments of wait. Daydreaming results studded with scenes of reaching and visiting Medina and the semantic enhancement enriches the implicit connotations of Na't diction up to the reader's love fervor, richness of imagination and sharpness of perception. That is structural criticism, which believes in vastness of meaning. Sabih's poetry thus creates a new world of implications beyond the fixed meanings of his diction. According to Wazir Agha:

> "In structural criticism, the creation signifies an invisible operation of poetic expression, yet it resides among the texts like a network of links (as a common value)."[93]

Sabih believes in intelligibility, transparency and clarity; he eschews ambiguity and complexity. He likes to convey his mind lucidly, in simple language and keeps his reader close to the central subject by common words, similes and metaphors. I am commenting on his first book "*Mah-e-Taybah*" published in 1989. Then his poetics were easy to understand by his readers. Na't reciting or melodizing is a unique experience; such a person remains free of ambiguity and complexity because he has to rouse crowds' emotions and affect their feelings by sentimental notes, straight gestures, cadence and the magic of melody and rhyming sensations. That state of mind is a gift for a Na't poet. Emotionality in collaboration with religiosity becomes a key to their

[93] Wazir Agha, *M'ana aur Tanazur*, p.137.

popularity as an excellent poet, for people understand him so well. Sabih was garlanded with admiration and approval by his readers.

Here one must remember that despite poetic thought, sublimity of ideas, and artistic maturity, one is not granted blessings nor does one win honor among people, unless one is love incarnation. People felt Sabih's heart-throb in their own breasts. On this subject Sabih once said:

> "I would always serve people who would come to attend Na't gatherings. I would spread mats and lay carpets before the commencement of programs. I would feel restless for serving the guests of the program. And today's admiration and approval of my Na't is the compensation of that humble service that I used to do with deep devotion."

Sabih's subsequent panegyrics proved greater success by special blessings of Almighty Allah. "*Jada-e-Rehmat*" came out in 1993. With sublime thought and artistic industry, it peculiarly attained recognition. Now post-modernist subjects came to his views. Beside structural elements, his vision encompassed post-modern neo-colonial common issues and turning towards Prophetic mode became his main stay. Basic human rights, feminism, and governance along with democratic morality, and social values became new pursuits. All that combined helped realize his intellectual evolution.

In the last decade of 20th century, iconoclastic rejection of patristicism (mode of thought of the church fathers), conservatism, and traditionalism made part of our devotional poetry. Detached from traditionalism, it turned Urdu Na't into a new poetic genre. Sabih's new Na't "*Jada-e-Rehmat*" revealed that the text of a creation does not come to fore as an exclusive or solitary text. Rather it appears after absorbing effects of several past texts into its semantic construction. Now we find Sabih stepping towards his evolution from

conscious to unconscious and collective consciousness. His texts became allusive of several layers of implicit connotations instead of only conveying fixed denotations.

Here his pieces of poetic art blossomed with devotion that moved common reader and at the same time affected the literary reader too with its higher literary standard. What is special with Sabih Rehmani is opening of the door of general approval to his glorification and devotional poetry. He unfolds his heart in simple words which strike strings of the listeners' hearts. The readers and listeners kiss the walls and doors in Medina along with the poet immersed in ecstasy, invoke salutations and greetings with him on the beloved Prophet ﷺ and Sabih keeps lighting the paths of devotion with his magic pen without leaving anything in ambiguity.

Understanding Sabih Rehmani's intellectual and artistic progression warrants a semantic study of his third Na't book "*Sarkar ke Qadmon mein*". This panegyric came out in 2012, after "*Jada-e-Rehmat*" in 1993. These 19 intervening years treasured his peculiar inner spring seasons, blossoms of Na't Paradise, waves of Medina fragrance, heavy showers of Mausoleum's effulgence and melting of his creative snow-boat into 23 Na't Rang books besides an Arabian sea ebbing and flowing in eyes, Na't gatherings echoing his love-ridden voice rhyming into emotional tunes entrancing large audiences and inundating his days and nights in Prophetic love. All this got reflected in his third book of Na't poetry. Many changes occurred in cultural and social scenario and bitter realities emerged which added to his thought chemistry. Love reached its peak with glimpses of past shaping a new love style with sublimity of thought, poetic diligence and the creative experience was attired afresh in structural semantics. According to Dr Wazir Agha:

> "In the creative phenomena, the layered emptiness of the creator's aspiration draws the external contents consistently towards itself. Thus a

> perspective emerges out of a perspective owing to the aspiration's magnetic pull."[94]

Sabih's semantic world is enriched with layers of meanings that come in through evasive style produced by lucidity, words touching the sentiments and pricking the arteries of heart, uniting traditional and modern colors in the garb of sensations. His poetics weaves cultural contents into multifaceted poetic expressions, keeping lucidity, rime and rhythm, poetic diction and devotion intact. He employs metaphors to arrange layers of meanings which have enhanced his quality of poetic expression and allusive presentation of semantic reality of his poetry. His vision encompasses surrounding realities, international issues, and beseeching style for the betterment and emancipation of the world Muslim community. With all these attributes and many other features that have not been included in this discourse make him stand out as an eminent Na't poet of his time.

Writing on effects of post-modernism on Urdu Na't poetry in his scholarly book *"Na't and Modern Trends of Criticism"* Kashif Irfan has elaborated the phenomenology of evasive semantics and forming up of layers of meanings through the "prism" symbol. A study by Stanford University on "Language through a Prism: A Spectral Approach for Multiscale Language Representations" is of basic significance in this regard. Kashif Irfan explains:

> "Post-modernism emphasizes the trend of creating one text over the other. In Na't experience, we can perceive this trend of overlapping texts using symbols. In poetry, a symbol is employed on creative bases, which renders a word multilayered signifying various connotations. In universal poetic expression, a word functions like a "prism". The ray of light enters it from one side and is emitted

[94] Wazir Agha, *M'ana aur Tanazur*, p.137.

> from the other side in seven colors. It disperses light and modifies its direction. In symbolic poetry, like a prism, a word forms several layers of meaning and rises to a universal and classic multifaceted grade."[95]

Figuratively, it describes a way of looking at or thinking about something that causes you to see or understand it in different ways, supplying quite a few meanings we call layers. This refers to the use of symbols in poetry. A symbol is an evident reality which keeps meanings concealed in it. Despite being a word, it cannot be found in lexicons. It is rather identified in its semantic perspective, or its milieu or historical perspective. That is how semantic evolution takes place.

18.15 Sabih's Attempt at imaging the 'Sublime' with profundity of Thought and Lucidity of Expression, Sarah Kazmi

Ms. Sara Kazmi, charged with literary zeal, felt highly inspired by Na't as a genre of Urdu literature, ventured to translate Sabih Rehmani's third poetic collection *"Sarkar ke Qadmon Mein"*—"Reverence unto His Feet". She penned her views about Sabih's Na't poetry and entrancing recitation in her preface to her work. Written for English readers, her valuable feelings and views about Sabih's poetry merit inclusion in this survey of scholars' views on Sabih's panegyrics. Excerpts from her write-up are reproduced here.

"Intellectual acumen coupled with refined aesthetic sense is indeed a rare combination in the charismatic personality of Mr Sabih Rehmani. I am deeply inspired by his profundity of thought and lucidity of expression. Mr Rehmani's renditions

[95] Kashif Irfan, Na't awr Jadid Tanqeedi Rujhanat—Na't and Modern trends of Criticism, p. 149.

have become synonymous with the choicest of kalams available in the genre of Na't. …..

His thoughts merit an unassuming sublimity, which is the natural outcome of one's humble attempts at imaging the 'Sublime' …….the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mr Rehmani not only writes but also delivers which makes him an exceptionally gifted person. Rehmani's scholarly writings and highly intellectual discourse set him apart from the rest, due to his emphasis on 'research'. It is his endeavors in the direction of research that Na't has assumed the status of a genre in literature, subject to critical approaches. Na't has hence grown in its parameters, it is an intellectual discourse, meaningful and thought-provoking and not mere panegyrics.

His Na't is 'dialogical' in content. That is why his poetry has great appeal to the masses as well. The reciprocity of the readers and listeners is much more ion case of Rehmani's metrical compositions. He has added to the utilitarian value of his art, by embracing readers from different folds of the society and allowing them a "voice" in Na't poetry. The reader, who is well-grounded in poetry and understands its niceties, will be amazed at the thoughts and words pregnant with meaning whereas the simplicity of expression will make it accessible to the not-so-well-read readers of Na't poetry. The latter, nevertheless, have an innate sense of belonging to this kind of poetry as they have a strong bonding with the 'cynosure' of this poetry, the Final Prophet ﷺ, the raison deter of the entirety of creations. Blessed are those who spend their days and nights admiring the Holiest Prophet ﷺ. Mr Sabih's works are indeed a masterpiece."

18.16 Review, Mehshar Badayuni

For composing Na't mere competency to versify and practice is not enough. It needs a spiritual illumination, well-mannered mental faculty and a melted heart.

In the Na't poetry of Sabih Rehmani, there is ever-growing ardent love, spiritual verve and an aesthetic expression of this fervour for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his poetry. The balance of colours of sentiments and imagination, sequence of reliability of thought and the standard of poetic art are some of his conspicuous characteristics that make his accent and style ever-green. He has been spiritually blessed with a bright and right direction of his journey in the field of Na't poetry which demands ecstatic feelings of Prophetic ﷺ love and a free flowing aesthetic expression. He has been gifted with all these blessings.

The soft manner in which he is advancing onward shows that the sphere of his popularity and fame is rather vaster and this excellence is not achieved by diligence and hard work but comes only as granted by the Supreme Grantor.

The glittering and shining of faith and ecstasy in his N'at has become the focus of the people of taste. Along with it the simplicity and civility of poetical rhythm and melody attracts the hearts. Sabih Rehmani is highly appreciated for his verse and its presentation in the Na't assemblies. For Na't the selection of a theme which is often proper, relevant and compatible to Na't is a clear proof of his thinking style and excellence of humour. Liking for this type of poetry is not confined to the taste of hearing alone. Its attraction and absorption survives even when it takes the form of written words on a paper. Readers themselves acknowledge it after they study his poetry. Allah Most High bless him with a developing passion for writing Na't and be merciful to him throughout his life!

18.17 The Poet of Light and Fragrance, Hafiz Ludhyanwi

A collection of Na't composition of my dear Sabih Rehmani by the name and style *'Jada-i- Rehmat'* is before me. The collection, though small, is of great value for taste and

fondness. It consists of "Hamd", "Na't", Hamd and Na't in free verse, Na't Hicos, Qat'at and Salam. In other words, Sabih Rehmani has decorated the colours of the rainbow in different genres of poetry. In every genre, the colours of his attachment and the flowers of his love and devotion seem to blossom.

By making "*gulab*" and "*roshni*" the rhyming words he has fragranced his devotion and enlightened his thought. Whatever may be the genres, his words emit rays of love and devotion in his verses, the deep love is reflected and generous expressions are used to vent his blessed sentiments. Mild warmth, a pleasant pang and love-discomfort blended with rest of his being in an ecstatic state are the prominent aspects of his poetic environ. Flow in thought, undisguised and plain expression, devotion and love have rendered his verse a magic art of winning hearts of the audience. When these colours come in harmony with tone, they work wonders.

In his poetry, *roshni* (the light) and *Khushbu* (the fragrance) permeate his aesthetic expressions. Every time they touch our hearts, they are fresh and unique.

Sabih Rehmani is treading *Jada-i-Rehmat* with fragrance and light. God willing, soon he shall reach the destination, which he has aspired!

18.18 Much ahead of his age, Shabnam Rumani

The windows of bliss may open to any mind and heart. There is no constraint or restriction on it. What suffices is just a divine signal from "His side".

This is an ecstatic work of a young poet who is affluently expressive much ahead of his age. Generally, Na't takes form of the literary genre ghazel as it is the easiest form of expression. Sabih Rehmani has also composed most of his effective Na'ts in the same format. However, his second collection contains, quite a number of *hamdiya* and *Na'tiya*

poems. These poems are in several formats, i.e., restricted to rhymed lines, free verse and in hico. This manifests two things: he is fully trying to prove himself and secondly he seeks to be identified as Na't poet. He is treading in both these directions. On the one hand, he is fulfilling the internal and external requisites of poetry and the on the other, he is confidently passing through spiritual delicacies and trials. That is like conquering the Himalayas.

I am glad that his Na't poetry is continuously progressing. I am sure that the direction his poetry has taken will bring him great success in this world and the Next. Insha Allah:

Sabih, I've dedicated myself to the Prophet's glory,
Heartening that my pen is treading the path of mercy.

A List of Sabih Rehmani's Works and Achievements

Sabih Rehmani's creative works

1. Mah-e-Taybah, (Na't Poetry) 1989, Nizami Academy, Karachi
2. Jada-i-Rehmat (Na't Poetry) 1993, Mumtaz Publishers, Karachi
3. Urdu ka Hamdiya Adab—Ajmali Mutali'a (Brief Study of Urdu Hamd Literature), 2020, Na't Research Center, Karachi

Anthologies of Sabih Rehmani's Na't poetry

Several collations of his Na't poetry were compiled by different scholars and produced by different publishers with different names:

1. Khabon main Sunehri jali hey—*The blessed golden grille in dreams* compiled by Aziz Ahsan
 First edition: 1997, Mumtaz Publishers Karachi
 Second edition: 1997, Fazli Sons Karachi
 Third edition: 1998, Taj Company, New Delhi
2. Salam ke liay hazir Ghulam ho jai (The slave seeks reaching your Doorsteps for Salam) compiled by Muhammad Maqsood Hussain Qadri, 2000, Faiz Raza Publications Karachi
3. Sarkar ﷺ ke Qadmon main, (Reverence unto his ﷺ feet) by Mudassar Sarwar Chand, 2006, Dua Publications Lahore
4. Ye Ruh medinay wali hey (This spirit is from Medina)
5. Kuliyat Sabih Rehmani, (Poetic works of Sabih) by Dr Shehzad Ahmed, 2019

English translation of Sabih Rehmani's works

1. Jada-i-Rehmat (Path of Mercy) Justice Dr Munir Ahmed Mughal, 2009
2. Reverence unto his ﷺ feet, Sarah Kazmi, 2012, Na't Research Center Karachi

Collection of letters to Sabih Rehmani

1. Na't awr Adab-e-Na't (Na't and its Proprieties), Allama Kaukab Nurani, Aukarwi
 First edition, 2003, Zia-ul-Qur'an Publications, Lahore
 Second Edition, 2004, Mehr Munir Academy, Karachi
2. Na't Namey (Letters to the editor) 2014, Dr Muhammad Suhail Shafiq
3. Na'tiya Adab, Masail-o-Mubahis, (Na't Literature, Issues and Premises, a topical and analytical study of letters to Sabih Rehmani), 2019 by Dr Abrar Abdul Salam, Na't Research Center Karachi

Compilations by Sabih Rehmani

1. Ewan-e-Na't (The Na't palace; collection of Na't poetry), 1993, Aqleem-e-Na't Karachi
2. Jamal-e-Mustafa, (The Beauty of the Prophet; collection of Na't poetry), 1993, Farid Publishers
3. Na't Nagar ka Basi, (The Resident of Na't Abode) 2008, Aqleem-e-Na't Karachi
4. Ghalib awr Sanai Khawja, (Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet) 2009, Na't Research Center, Karachi
5. Urdu Na't me Tajalliyat-e-Seerat, (Seerat beams in Urdu Na't) 2015, Na't Research Center, Karachi
6. Ghalib awr Sanai Khawja, (Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet) 2016, Second edition, Adara Yadgar-e-Ghalib, Karachi
7. Dr Aziz Ahsan and Mutalia-e-Hamd-o-Na't, 2015, (Dr Aziz Ahsan and Hamd and Na't studies—Dr Aziz Ahsan, Studies of Hamd and Na't) Na't Research Center, Karachi
8. Urdu Na't ki She'ari Riwayat, (Poetic Tradition of Na't Poetry) 2016, Academy Bazyaft, Karachi
9. Midhat Nama, (Na't poetry) 2016, Na't Research Center, Karachi
10. Kuliyat-e-Aziz Ahsan, (Poetic works of Aziz Ahsan) 2017, Na't Research Center, Karachi
11. Pakistani Zabanon me Na't: Riwayat awr Irtiqa, (Tradition and progress of Na't in Pakistani languages) 2017, Na't Research Center, Karachi

12. Kalam-e- Raza: Fikri wo Fanni Zawiay, (Ideological and artistic aspects of Na't poetry of Raza) 2017, Na't Research Center, Karachi
13. Iqbal ki Na't: Fikri wa Usloobiyati Mutalia, (Intellectual and Artistic study of Iqbal's Na't) 2018, Academy Bazyaft, Karachi
14. Kalam-e-Mohsin Kakorvi, Adabi wa Fikri Jihat, (Mohsin's Na't: Literary and intellectual aspects) 2018, Academy Bazyaft, Karachi
15. Urdu Hamd ki Sh'eri Riwayat, (Poetic tradition of Urdu Hamd) 2019, Academy Bazyaft, Karachi
16. Ameer Minai ki Na't, aik Mutaliyati Tanazur, (A Study of Ameer Minai's Na't) 2021, Academy Bazyaft, Karachi

Establishment of of Aqleem-e-Na't, Na't Research Center and Global Na't Foundation

1. In 1995, Sabih Rehmani established Aqleem-e-Na't to bring out Na't Rang book serial.
2. Aqleem-e-Na't also published books on Na't Research and Criticism.
3. In December 1995, Sabih Rehmani declared Na't Rang, a movement.
4. In 2002, Aqleem-e-Na't was named as Na't Research Center which started publishing books on research and criticism of Na't to provide study material to students and scholars in universities who started writing theses and books on modern Na't.
5. In 2005, Sabih Rehmani floated his new objective to establish a Global Na't Foundation and sought for opinions. The work is on in this pursuit. Na't Research Centers have already been established and are working in India and England.

The Magazines and Journals patronized/edited/published by Sabih Rehmani

1. Lailat-un-Na't, Karachi, 1987-94
2. Iqan International Center, 1992
3. Na't Rang, Karachi, (30 issues), 1995 to date

Research Books, Journals and Theses on Sabih Rehmani's Works

1. Na't Shaeri ke frogh main Na't Rang ki Khidmat (Services of Na't Rang in the promotion of Na't poetry), (MPhil), Halima BiBi, Guide Dr Sufian Safi, Hazara University Mansehra,
2. Tanqeedat-e-Na't ka Tanqeedi Jaiza, Na't Rang ke Tanazur main, (A Critical survey of Na't Criticism in the perspective of Na't Rang) M.Phil. Urdu, Prof Tayba Nighat, Govt College for Women Faisalabad,
3. Na't Rang ka Tanqeedi Mutalia, (A Critical study of Na't Rang) (M.Phil.) Aqsa Sultana, Dr Yar Muhammad Gondal, Sargodha University
4. Na'tiya Shaeri ke Tanqeedi Rujhanat k frogh main Na't Rang ka kirdar, (The role of Na't Rang in promoting critical trends of Na't poetry) Thesis for PhD. Muhammad Sabir Hussain, Guide, Dr Rabia Sarfraz, GC University Faisalabad.

University Theses for M.A., M.Phil. and PhD degrees

1. Sabih Rehmani ki Shakhsiat awr fun ka Tehqiqi awr Fanni Jaiza, (Sabih Rehmani's personality and art: an analytical research work) by Aisha Naz, Guide Dr Suhaila Farooqi, 2011, Thesis for M.A. Urdu, University of Karachi
2. Sabih Rehmani behaithiyat Na't Nigar (Sabih Rehmani as a Na't Poet) by Hafiza Sajida Iqbal, Guide Dr Shabbir Ahmed Qadri, 2013, for M.A. Urdu GC University Faisalabad,
3. Sabih Rehmani ki Sha'iri ka Fanni awr Fikri Mutali'a, (Artistic and ideological study of Sabih Rehmani's Na't) (Mah-e-Taybah) Thesis for M.A. Urdu, by Tamanna Shaheen Guide Dr Tehseen BiBi, Women University Sawabi 2018
4. Urdu Na't ke frogh main Sabih Rehmani ke kirdar ka Tehqiqi awr Tanqeedi Jaiza, (Sabih Rehmani's role in promoting Urdu Na't: an Analytical Research) by Salman Ali, Guide Dr Muhammad Ashraf Kamal, M.Phil. Thesis, Qurtaba University of Science and Information Technology DI Khan. 2018-19

5. Kuliyat –e- Sabih Rehmani main Hamdiya awr Na'tiya 'Anasar, (Elements of Hamd and Na't in Sabih's Na't works) by Maham Gillani Guide Dr Taqdees Zahra, Lahore Women University, 2018
6. Ma'asar Na't go Sh'uara ka Mauzuati, Fanni Asloobi Mutalia, (A study of Art, Style and Contents of Contemporary Na't poets: Hafeez Taib, Muzaffar Warsi, Sabih Rehmani), by Zahid Humanyun, Guide Dr Arshad Mahmood Asif, International Islamic University Islamabad. 2019
7. Na't Namay, Sabih Rehmani ka Tehqiqi awr Tajziati Mutali'a, (Letter to editor Na't Rang, an Analytical and Research study) a Research Project by Shama' Feroze Asst. Prof. Urdu Dept.: 2018-19
8. Kuliyat Sabih Rehmani ka Tehqiqi wa Tanqeedi Mutalia (Research and Critical Study of Sabih Rehmani's Poetic Works), Rif'at Yasmin, Guide, Dr Riaz Majeed, Riphah International University Faisalabad, 2021.

BS Theses on Works of Sabih Rehmani

Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan
Guide: Dr Iqbal Kamran (Session 2017-2021)

1. Syed Basit Mahmud**,** BS 7th, Critical Study of Sabih Rehmani's compilation: Ideological and Artistic Aspects of Raza'a Poetic Works (*Kalam-e-Raza k Fanni awr Fikri Zawiay ka Tanqeedi Mutalia*)
2. Abd-ur-Rehman, BS 7th, Sabih Rehmani ki Talif Ghalib awr Sanai Khawaja pr Hawashi awr T'aliqat (*Marginalia and footnotes on Sabih Rehmani's Compilation "Ghalib and Hymnology of the Prophet"*)
3. Muhammad Ibrahim, BS 7th, Sabih Rehmani ki Talif "Na't Nagar ka Basi" pr Hawashi awr T'aliqat (*Marginalia and footnotes on "The Resident of Na't Abode"*)
4. Mujahid Hussain, BS 7th, Sabih Rehmani ki Talif Urdu Na't me Tajalliyat-e-Seerat, (*Seerat beams in Urdu Na't*)
5. Durr-e-Najaf, BS 7th, Sabih Rehmani ki kitab "Urdu ka Hamdia Adab" pr Hawashi awr awr T'aliqat (*Marginalia and footnotes on "Urdu Hamdia Literature"*)

Books and Journals

1. Safeer-e-Na't, Sabih Rehmani Number, Aftab Kareemi, 2009, Aftab Academy Karachi
2. Mujalla: Sana Khawn-e-Muhammad ﷺ
3. Jada-i-Rehmat ka Musafir, (The wayfarer of the path of mercy) Dr Hasrat Kasganjwi, 2008, Aftab Academy Karachi
4. Fun-e-Adariya Nawisi awr Na't Rang, (The Art of editorial-writing and Na't Rang) Dr Afzaal Ahmad Anwar, 2010, Na't Research Center, Karachi
5. Na'tiya Adab: Masail-o-Mubahis (Na't Literature: Issues and Premises: a topical and Analytical Study of letters to Sabih Rehmani), 2019 by Dr Abrar Abdul Salam, Na't Research Center Karachi
6. Na't Namey (letters written to Sabih Rehmani), 2014, Dr Muhammad Suhail Shafiq
7. Sabih Rehmani ki Na'tiya Sha'iri, (Na't Poetry of Sabih Rehmani) Dr Shama Feroze, 2020, Fazli Sons Karachi
8. Talifat-e-Sabih Rehmani, naqd-e-Na't ki nai Tashkeel (Compilations of Sabih Rehmani: Forming up of New Na't Criticism), 2021, Dr Tahira In'am, Mehr Graphics and Publishers Faisalabad
9. Sabih Rehmani: Shakhs-o-Aks: (Sabih Rehmani: Personage and reflection), 2021, Dr Tahseen BiBi, Women University Sawabi
10. Sabih Rehmani's Architectural Role in Modern Na't, 2021, Shaykh Abdul Aziz Dabbagh, Yorkshire Adabee Forum

Glossary

Aesthetics:	The philosophical study of beauty and taste
Altruism:	Charity
Celestial:	Heavenly, Spiritual
Croon:	Sing in a soft, low voice
Ecstatic Semantic Behavior:	Charging Words with Thought and Sentiments through Creative Imagination
Emotion-stimulus:	Result of sensorial stimulus processing by the cognitive mechanisms.
Encomium:	Written Praise of Some Elite
Etymology:	Origin and History of Words
Extrasensory:	Involving Abilities beyond Normal Senses
Fraternization:	Making Brothers
Genre:	Type of Literary Creation
Glorification:	Praise of the Almighty Allah
Lighting Disclosure:	Display of Spiritual Light
Lullaby:	Cradlesong
Na't:	Adoring, Admiring the Prophet
Neonates:	New-Born
Omniscient:	All-Knowing
Panegyric:	Written Praise
Pathos:	Sadness, Despair
Perspicacity:	Ability to understand quickly and accurately; deep insight
Phenomenology:	Study of Phenomena
Philanthropy:	Compassion, Goodwill
Poetic Quiver:	Inner Tremor in A Creative Moment

Post-structuralism:	An extension and critique of structuralism, especially as used in critical textual analysis.
Predilection:	Liking
Prolixity:	Verbosity, wordiness
Qawafi:	Rhyming words or penult syllables with identical final sounds preceding radeef
Radeef:	The ending repeat words of second line of every verse)
Ratiocination:	Logical Process
Religiosity:	Being Too Religious
Revelatory:	Revealing
Scriptures:	Revelations Sent To Earlier Prophets
Semantic:	Pertaining To Meaning
Semantics:	The branch of linguistics and logic concerned with meaning.
Semiotics:	Philosophical theory of signs and symbols that dealing with their functions; comprises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics
Sequential divide:	Long division that helps in breaking the division problem into a sequence
Structural criticism:	A research method, a type of textual research that literary critics use to interpret texts
Terrestrial:	Worldly, Earthly
Tome:	A Large Heavy Book
Transcendental:	Unearthly, Divine, Otherworldly
Verve:	Poetic/Artistic Zeal
Visage:	Face, Appearance

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